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Everybody's

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Gen Lit Dept
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Ann Arbor
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NE 1923

25¢

Complete Novel
"The Lost Diana"
Inez Haynes Irwin

ll in this issue— Hugh Walpole, Honore Willsie, E. R. Punsha
ephen Vincent Benet, Arthur D. Howden Smith, T. L. Sappi

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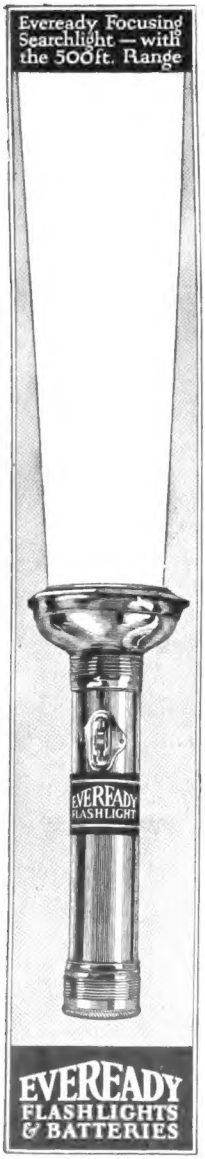

" . . . A 500-foot bee-line of light. An Eveready Focusing Searchlight is an outdoor necessity."

Another Eveready triumph—the new Eveready Focusing Searchlight with the *500-foot range*—a real *hand search-light*—tears a hole in fog, smoke, or blackest night!

A more powerful longer range development of the noted Eveready Spotlight. The most intense light concentrated in a Flashlight for popular use—3,000 candle power at the focal point in a broad beam of piercing light. Automobilists, campers, vacationists, firemen, policemen, watchmen, seamen, sportsmen on land and water, let your experience with the Spotlight tell you what this Searchlight can do for you. Try it. We've priced it low—$4.50 complete with batteries, and extra Eveready concentrated filament Mazda lamp in end cap—in either corrugated fibre or nickel-plated case.

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The Little Things that Make Men Rich

UPON what small things the destiny of a man may turn. Today a man sits beside another on a park bench. Strangers, they fall into conversation. Their talk results in a business organization that puts them both "on top of the world." Their names became household words.

Today a man makes a train acquaintance; a few years later this trifling event has lifted him from mediocrity to a splendid position at an enormous salary.

Today a man carelessly lends a friend enough to start a small business. His $500 advance brings him ninety million dollars.

Today a $25-a-week clerk skims idly through a magazine. Tomorrow he has left his rut of low earnings for a position paying $8,000 a year.

And who knows what might have happened had not the two met on a park bench, had not the one made a train acquaintance, had the third refused his friend the assistance, had not the other looked idly thru the magazine.

On how little a thing depended their success. And how close they came to staying poor, had it not been for these incidents.

Call it what you will—coincidence or a deep and incomprehensible plan of an all-seeing fate—*this moment sees you in a position to take advantage of a little thing that may make you independent.* The very act of reading this message opens before you a vista of opportunity that has no limits, a chance to realize for yourself every desirable thing in life—money, standing, influence, friends and success.

Had you skipped this message, this opportunity might have been forever lost to you. If you fail to take advantage of this opportunity, *now that you can learn about it,* you might as well have never read this page. But—and here is the crux of the thing—if you follow the dictates of your mature and better judgment, you will look back, a year hence, and say: "To think that my success in life hung upon so slender a thread as a printed message that I might have missed."

For my mission in life, my work, my vocation, is to take men who are working for low pay, impart to them certain knowledge and suddenly lift them from the rut to positions that bring them magnificent earnings.

Thousands of men thank me for their success. Thousands of men say: "Your message was the turning-point in my life, the influence that has lifted me from poverty to $5,000, $7,000, even $10,000 a year and more."

And I am ready to do this same thing for you. Here is one of these golden opportunities that come to a man only once in a lifetime. All I ask of you is that you have ordinary intelligence, and that you have burning within you the ambition, the determination to step out of the ordinary position at low pay for a position that will permit you to realize every reasonable ambition.

If you are that kind of a man, then mail the appended request blank to me. I will send you my book entirely free and without obligation, telling in detail how you can quickly enter this wonderful field that pays 2, 5 or 10 times your present earnings.

An Interesting Book FREE!

HERE is opportunity. Don't ignore her loud knock upon your door. For upon such a little, such a simple act, as filling in and mailing this request may depend the entire future of your life. The act is up to you. Your decision made now tells unmistakably whether or not you have the stuff in you of which successes are made.

J. E. GREENSLADE, President
National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 74-G, Chicago, Ill.

I am interested. Send me the Free Book and full details. I am under no obligation.

Name .....

Address .....

Age ..... *Occupation* .....

EVERYBODY'S June, 1923

Published monthly by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $2.50 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Aug. 16, 1899, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada.

Volume XLVIII Number 6

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Pyorrhea Strikes Four—Misses *Only One*

Nature warns with bleeding gums

Four persons out of every five past forty, and thousands younger, too, contract Pyorrhea.

So be on your guard, especially when the gums are tender and bleed easily.

Play safe. Brush your teeth with Forhan's For the Gums. If used consistently and used in time, it will prevent Pyorrhea or check its progress. Keeps the teeth white and clean, as well, and the gums firm and healthy. Pleasant to the taste. At all druggists, 35c and 60c in tubes.

Formula of R. J. Forhan, D. D. S.
Forhan Company
New York
Forhan's Limited, Montreal

Glands Used To Restore Hair Growth

Science of Gland Therapy Relieves Baldness—New Treatment Restores Health and Growth.

Baldness in both men and women is now generally ascribed by scientists to defective functioning of endocrine glands. Hair growth is dependent upon the secretions of these glands—these secretions making possible the assimilation of those elements in the blood which are vital to a luxurious growth of hair.

Now it is possible for most bald people to have a luxuriant growth of hair through the discovery of E. R. Alexander, nationally known scientist. Dr. Alexander, through the concentration of glands, can supply the deficiency of gland secretion and produce a full growth of hair.

This discovery may be easily used in the privacy of your own home. Within a few weeks you can notice new, vigorous hair beginning to come in and with this growth you can gradually restore your hair to its former bright, healthy color.

So confident is Dr. Alexander that you can be relieved of the embarrassment of baldness and regain the normal hair growth by this method that he offers to send a regular $4.00 treatment for only $2.00 to anyone who will write for it. Use it according to directions, and if at the end of a month you do not find your hair returning with all its former vigor, the treatment does not cost a cent.

SEND NO MONEY—just your name and address to Alexander Laboratories, 652 Gateway Station, Kansas City, Mo., and this treatment will be mailed at once in plain wrapper. Try it according to directions and if at the end of a month you are not more than satisfied with results, your money will be refunded at once. A big Kansas City bank guarantees that Dr. Alexander is reliable and holds $1,000 cash as a guarantee to return your money if you wish.

Don't suffer the embarrassment of baldness—give the treatment a trial on this liberal offer.

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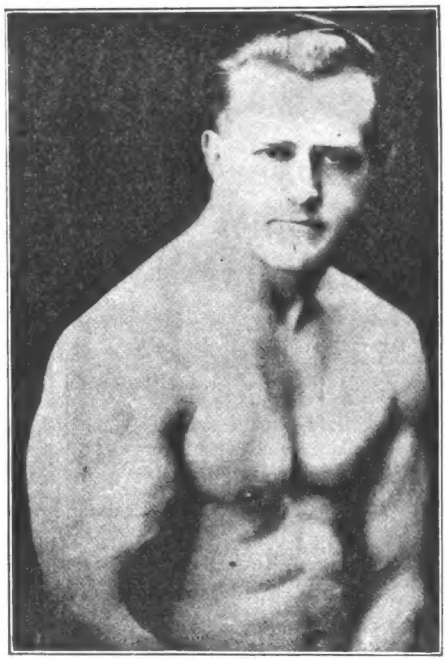
Useless as a Rabbit's Tail

The best thing a rabbit can do with his tail is to sit on it. And that's about as much use as some men make of their bodies. There are so many flat-chested, weak-kneed specimens walking the streets these days that a real live man is a curiosity. The average man of today has about as much ambition for exercise as a jelly-fish. If he runs 50 yards, he puffs like a steam engine, sits down and feels as though he were ready to die. And, take it from me, he isn't far from it.

Cut it out fellows. Don't be a cake-eater. If you ever knew the joys of a real healthy body, you would start this minute to get one. And that is just what you are going to do. The undertaker has his eye on you, but give him the laugh and say: "Not yet, old boy."



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

THE GATEWAY TO HEALTH

It is open to you. Come on in and get busy. Yes, it means work, but Oh boy! what it brings to you. In just 30 days I am going to put one full inch on your biceps; yes, and two inches on your chest. But that is only the start. Now comes the real works.

I am going to broaden your shoulders, fill out your chest and give you a pair of arms that carry a wallop. Meanwhile I work on your inner muscles surrounding your vital organs. Every breath you take brings a deep inhale of oxygen into your lungs, purifying your blood, so that your whole body will fairly tingle with new life. You will feel real pep in your old backbone.

This is no idle talk. My treatment has stood the test of years and is now endorsed by experts as absolutely the shortest and only sure route to Health and Strength. I don't promise results—I guarantee them. Come on now and make me prove it.

Send for My New 64-Page Book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing and it is yours to keep. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send to-day—right now, before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN

Dept. 5006, 309 Broadway, New York City

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Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10c, for which you are to send me, without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." Please write or print plainly.

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Does Money Slip through Your Fingers?

Many spend—few accumulate. These are the basic facts of finance. Since the dawn of civilization no method has been discovered of achieving financial independence other than spending less than your income.

You are working for others until your money begins to work for you. The world may owe everyone a living, but it's more satisfactory to collect it in interest coupons than in alms.

Thousands have learned that the surest, safest way to get ahead is to re-arrange expenses so as to make a weekly or monthly investment in Columbia First Mortgage Bonds. $25 a week so invested, with interest re-invested will amount to over $20,000 in eleven years. $40 a month will amount to $19,000 in twenty years if interest is added to the principal.

Columbia Bonds have two fundamental advantages—they are safe and the interest rate of 6½% is higher than is earned on other bonds of equal safety. A Columbia Bond is a first mortgage on land, building and rental of the finest type of New York apartment house. Return of principal is fully provided for by the unique Columbia system of monthly repayment of the mortgage by the borrower.

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Don't Hide Them With a Veil; Remove Them With Othine—Double Strength

This preparation for the treatment of freckles is usually so successful in removing freckles and giving a clear, beautiful complexion that it is sold under guarantee to refund the money if it fails.

Don't hide your freckles under a veil; get an ounce of Othine and remove them. Even the first few applications should show a wonderful improvement, some of the lighter freckles vanishing entirely.

Be sure to ask the druggist for the double strength Othine—it is this that is sold on the money-back guarantee

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Just a few drops

combed into the hair and almost immediately you can see "listless locks" begin to take on new life, new lustre, new silky sheen—stray ends and straggly strands melding into glorious waves and curls.

And in 20 minutes

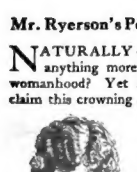
your mirror shows you a new head of hair—marcelled and curled as you like it best; with a natural wave that no artificial beauty-parlor process could possibly duplicate.

Naturally Curly Hair in 20 Minutes with Marvelous New Spanish Liquid

Delightful elixir of Spanish herbs makes any hair soft, lustrous and wavy—and keeps it so!

Mr. Ryerson's Personal Story of His New Discovery

NATURALLY curly hair—soft, wavy and lustrous! Is there anything more gloriously beautiful in all the charms of womanhood? Yet how few women—how sadly few—may claim this crowning glory!



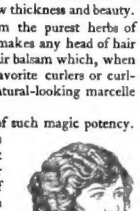
Lovely Curls

All my life, as an investigating chemist, it has been my dream to find a perfect curling and hairdressing fluid. And I've been working at it ceaselessly close on to nine years. All told, I've spent a fortune in experimenting; testing all known curling methods, and rejecting them as unreliable, inefficient, often harmful.

But perseverance has finally brought a reward greater than I had ever dared hope for. We have at last compounded a curling fluid which not only curls the straightest head of hair, but beautifies it, too. A marvelous hair and scalp tonic which increases the growth and "life" of the hair as it curls and waves it—adding new silkiness, new softness, new thickness and beauty.

It is a colorless fluid compounded from the purest herbs of Southern Spain—a delicate elixir which makes any head of hair naturally curly and wavy—a delightful hair balsam which, when combed into the hair or used with your favorite curlers or curling iron, creates the prettiest and most natural-looking marcelle you ever saw.

I have never known another liquid of such magic potency. Even after a shampoo, when the hair is often stubbornly straight and unruly, it performs the miracle of making the hair behave—making it obey the commands of comb or curling iron—staying put where you want it—besides producing immediate and captivating curls, ringlets and water-waves.



A Matchless Marcelle

No matter whether your hair is long, short or bobbed; whether dry or oily; blonde or brunette, Liquid Marcelle will solve your curling and hairdressing problems.

Free Distribution $3.50 Bottles

(ONLY ONE TO A FAMILY)

LIQUID Marcelle is made from very costly ingredients—and can be compounded only in small quantities at one time. So $3.50 is a fair retail price for it—the price we shall establish when we distribute it through the drug stores later on.

But right now, we are anxious to make friends for it as rapidly as possible in all parts of the country. So we have decided to distribute the first 10,000 bottles at the net cost of production and handling—without one cent of profit. We have figured this down to $1.87, which includes preparing and compounding the herbs, bottling, packing and shipping the finished liquid. But this offer, it must be understood, is open to only one member of any single family.

Wavy Bob

You need send no money. Merely sign and mail the coupon below. When the postman brings your bottle of Liquid Marcelle, pay him $1.87 plus a few cents postage. And remember, the Century guarantee insures your satisfaction, as always. If you are not more than delighted with the results, you may return the bottle and its unused contents at the end of a five-day trial and we will refund your money in full.

Wm Ryerson

Chief Chemist

SEND NO MONEY—*Simply Sign and Mail Coupon*

CENTURY CHEMISTS
(Originators of the famous 40 Minute Beauty Clay)
Dept. 190, Century Bldg., Chicago

Please send me, in plain wrapper, by insured parcel post, a full size $3.50 bottle of Liquid Marcelle. I will pay postman $1.87, plus few cents postage, on delivery, with the understanding that if, after a five-day trial, I am not elated with the results from this magic curling fluid, I may return the unused contents in the bottle, and you will immediately return my money in full.

*Name*_____

*Street*_____

*Town*_____ *State*_____

If apt to be out when postman calls, you may enclose $2 with coupon, and Liquid Marcelle will be sent you postpaid.

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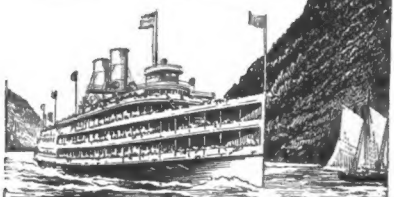
FAMOUS STEAMERS
"Washington Irving" "Hendrick Hudson"
"Robert Fulton" "Albany"
"De Witt Clinton"
"Alexander Hamilton" (under construction)



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The Pleasant Route To Vacation Lands

No matter which direction you travel, the Day Line forms the ideal connecting link between New York and the Catskills, Berkshires, Adirondacks, Saratoga, Lake George, Lake Champlain, Niagara Falls and all points North and East. Delightful One-Day Outings from New York.

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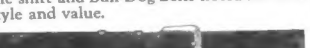

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"Wow!"

Good? You bet!
Juicy and mellow!
And mouth-watery!
Try that
"Good old licorice flavor!"

Black Jack

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JOHNSON'S WOOD DYE

Johnson's Wood Dye is very easy to apply—dries in four hours—penetrates deeply, bringing out the beauty of the grain—made in all popular shades. Color card in book.

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"The Wood Finishing Authorities"
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Please send me, free and postpaid, your Instruction Book on Wood Finishing.

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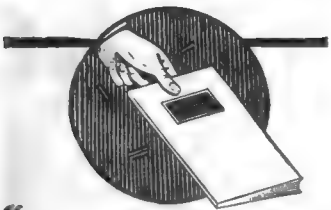

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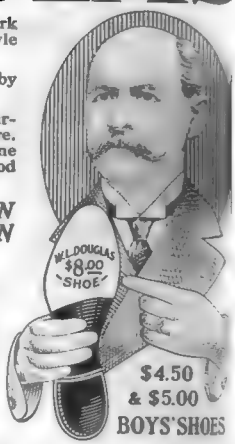

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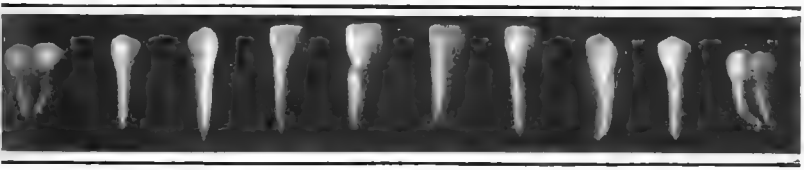

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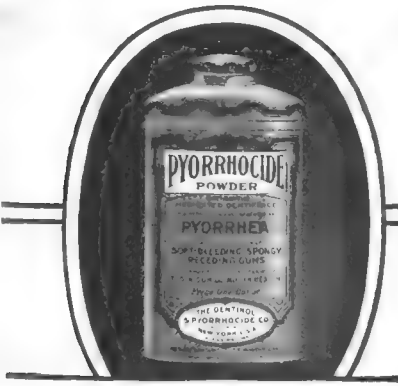

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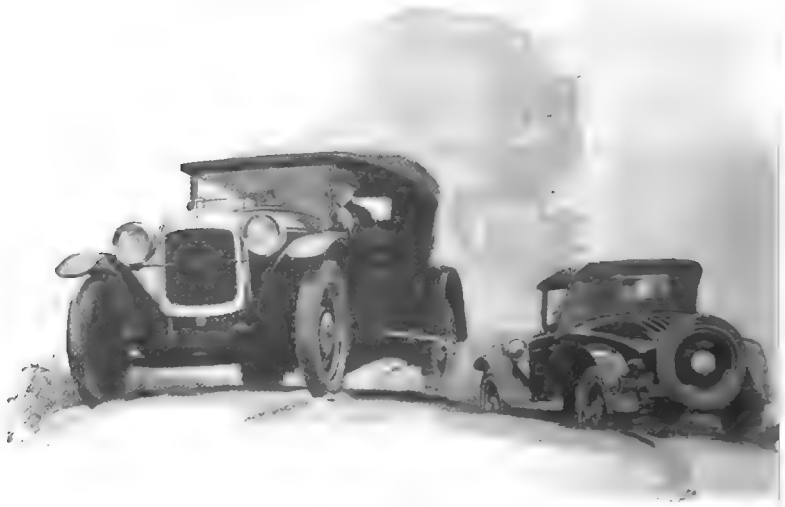

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Everybody's

NUMBER SIX JUNE, 1923 VOLUME XLVIII

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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"You are hurt! You are hurt!" Bessie's eyes looked away with a shudder from the red, welling puncture that disfigured the white skin.

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The Golden Bessie

Romance at Its Best in This Story of a Miser's Daughter and the Cynical Court into Which She Was Introduced

By Stephen Vincent Benét

Illustration by Sidney H. Riesenberg

IT BEGINS with an old rime, with a queer rime, with a quavering song:

Oh, the captain he's fine in his gay scarlet coat.
Bold sailors seem kings on the seas where they float.
And lawyers and merchants are gallant and free.
But gold masters all men, my golden Bessee!

The harsh, lonely voice with that somber color of tone in it that rang dully through all it uttered like the plucking of a leaden wire, that tone that is seldom found in the accents of ordinary, pleasant men, fell off into silence for a moment. The ragged man in the torn coat, eaten with holes where it was not piebald with patches, the man with the long, arrogant fingers, shapely and curving, that come by birthright from generations of ancestors who have never worked roughly with their hands, the man of the eyes that were always a little too bright these days, passed his fingers through the tangle of his white hair, so blanched it seemed almost artificial when contrasted with the powerful maturity of his slight, strong body. He looked round the chamber a little dazedly.

The song which he had just finished and certain lessons in the conduct of life which he gave to his daughter daily were his sole relaxations now—and even they were so narrowly entwined with the single purpose of his present existence that the very idea of relaxation in connection with them might have seemed far-fetched to a stranger. But when a soul has but one diversion, that diversion is apt to grow more queerly intense with pleasure than people of a varied interest imagine. It excites the mind inordinately, as a single deep draft of wine does the senses of a fellow who tastes it seldom. It was so with Geoffrey Barrow.

This hour or so snatched out of every rigorous day, in which to temper by ballad and precept the young mind of the only living thing he kept by him nowadays, was an hour to linger over with a delight near to the unearthly in its extremity. At no other time could he rest and know himself justified—here, even playfulness was a choicer species of labor, for it clutched at the future, for himself, for his name, for his treasure. His eyes moved satisfiedly about the chamber again.

The room was spacious and nobly proportioned—all its furnishings and ornaments had been splendid and costly. Now its paneling—the oak black with age, with the ceiling where a few faint sparks of tarnished gilt still glimmered a little in the recesses of the carving—alone remained to show that it had once had its proper place in a house maintained with magnificence. The floor was as dirty as if it had not been swept for years. Bird-droppings and the tracks of small animals spotted it. From a corner came the squeak and scuffling of rats. The panes of the tall windows were broken and stuffed with rags. Two crazy rush-bottomed chairs were the only furniture. In front of the fireplace lay a huddle of rags and dirty straw and sacking that looked like a beggar's bed. The white-haired man saw all—and was pleased by all.

With a tall-enough ladder he might yet be able to scrape those few flecks of stale

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gold down from the ceiling. He groaned inwardly—a ladder like that would be so costly to purchase, and days spent in making one would be gambling on a chance that might show no profit at all. His mind went eagerly off into calculations—was recalled with a jerk.

"AM I not to say my responses to-day then, father?" said a shy voice at his elbow.

Geoffrey Barrow, the last of the griping Barrows, turned and looked at Elizabeth, his one daughter. She was clad in a single garment made of sacking, and her bare toes peeped unconcernedly through the cracks in her rotten shoes—but even in her thirteen-year-old gawkiness she showed promise of very great beauty. In her delicate, heavenly color, in her straight, pure nose that was neither too long nor too short, in her small, ripe mouth with its "bee-stung" lower lip, and her eyes as deeply clear blue as the tint of a precious Chinese jar, above all in the rarity of her shimmering, tangled hair that fell below her slim waist when she let it fall, she was to have all that loveliness that dizzies the mind. Geoffrey Barrow stared at her, eyes intent. The gold on the ceiling did not matter after all. Here was other gold, untarnished—more refined, more priceless gold. At a high price, that gold—to be sold very high——

"Am I not to make my responses, then, at all?" said Bessie again, her voice a little frightened at the fixity of her father's gaze.

"Why, yes, my daughter." Barrow had recovered himself—that gold must be molded, schooled to gather more gold and more when time was ripe—to gather and never spend. He fumbled in his rags for a dirty cloth-wrapped packet tied up with a dozen kinds of soiled string, his movements oddly ceremonious. From the packet he took one guinea after another to the number of twelve, looking furtively about him as he handled each one. He ranged the guineas in a line on the filthy floor, his hands crooking greedily, hating to let them go.

"What is this, now, Bessie?" he said in a husky voice when he had done.

The child's eyes looked at the pieces with grave delight in the game.

"They are gold pieces, father." Her voice had the hushed seriousness of one serving a ritual.

"Right! They are gold pieces. And how many are they in number?"

"Twelve."

"And they are——"

"The twelve months of the transitory year. In each month we should make one thing only our sole endeavor—to gather gold."

"Right, Bessie; right!" The man's voice was feverish—feverish—the child's pitiably sincere. He fumbled in his packet, clawed out a ring with a gaping hole where the stone had been pried away—a thick, hooped, glittering earring, a sheet of something thin as foil that shone, a tangle of shining threads.

"What is this?"

"Gold."

"And this?"

"Gold."

"And this—and this—and this?" He touched the first guinea as well with a trembling finger.

"Gold. They are all pure gold." The clear notes of the child's voice rang hollow in the great chamber—hollow and sharp, like the chinking of delicate coins. Her father's face was thin with some passion now. His voice rose eerily.

"Is it to be spent?" His eyes held her.

"No."

"Is it to be lent, then?"

"Never!"

"Then what shall we do with it, Bessie—my golden Bessie?"

"Keep it, father; keep it!" The child's voice was victorious at answering so well. She clapped her smooth hands.

The stare died from her father's eye, and with it died the intenseness that had tightened his frame like a racked man's body. He was weak now, weak and trembling a little all over, like a man waking from sleep that had given nightmare.

He patted her firm hand gently with his unstable hand.

"Good girl, my Bessie; good girl!" he said in quick, worried breaths. "A rare daughter, golden Bessie—a rare, true daughter of mine!"

His head sank on his knees; for a considrable space of time he squatted there, motionless. The child watched him affectionately, with neither terror nor pity. Knowing few other fathers with whom to compare him, she knew only that he was hers

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and had never spoken ungently to her since she could remember, and that each day, toward evening, he unbent and played with her this exciting and rapid game.

After a time a voice came from the squatting figure—a voice incongruously normal.

"I think we should have supper, Bessie, my dear."

"Yes, father." And the child rose and moved away as easily as a fox to the cupboard in the room where their supper lay—two hunks of black bread, a jug of sweet milk that had cost a whole penny.

When she was gone the squatting figure stirred. It began to replace its treasure in the packet. The oddments first—then the gold pieces—very slowly—luxurious fingers stroking each shining coin as tenderly as if they caressed a woman's hair.

JOHN CUSTYN hummed the old words idly as his big bay slashed clods still smelling of dew from the squelching turf:

"The Viners for duty, the Custyns for beauty,
The Reeves to law with the crown,
And the griping Barrows to hoard their gold
Till the world turns upside down."

He was singularly young in all ways of the body and some of the mind for his years, which were forty in his time, which was a little before the hour when the second Charles, King of England, regretted that he took so unconscionable a time a-dying. Most of his old merry companions were less merry now—the pretty jests of their youth had caught up with them, turning against their old masters like cast-off hounds. Some were dead, and not pleasantly, either—in the faces of the others the purple veins gathered like network; they grew burly, coarsened of feature, or withered like burnt-up shrubs. But on John Custyn the whole rakehelliness of the Restoration—and he had been boon friend of Rochester's at one time—had had as little effect as the scorch of the sun on iron. The Custyns made old bones.

He had kept his whip-lash suppleness, his fencer's wrist, his palate for wine, his eye for a face, his rocklike seat in the saddle. The dark spark came to his eyes on occasion yet. The rare flush that rose sometimes in his olive skin when he was more than usual amused came as easily as a boy's. To himself, at least, he seemed not to have shed one scrap of the inordinate Custyn gusto for living in his twenty years' hunting of pleasure, in the careless quest for something genuinely worth a Custyn's pains.

Moreover, he had for two years been Earl of Camlet, and, as most of those two years had been spent on a French embassy, he was to all intents and purposes, new-come to his possessions. So, as he rode through the morning, he hummed out, of mere lightheadedness:

"And the griping Barrows to hoard their gold
Till the world turns upside down."

There was something to be said for such country rimes after all, he reflected, in spite of their devilish lack of polish—for he had always maintained toward the arts a genuine if properly condescending interest, and could both paint and rime in the very best manner compatible with gentility. The griping Barrows—He must be hard upon Barrow Chase at the moment.

How came such an oddity as miserliness in the blood of a good line, he wondered, to strengthen and strengthen until it drove its last servant beyond the restraints of the sane? For the tales of Geoffrey Barrow and the daughter he kept like a young Gipsy were racier than the run of such county tittle-tattle. There was a flavor of lowness about such avarice—a vulgar odor. As long as one could not carry gentle blood without some curse of sorts, he mused languidly, he was glad that the Custyn dilemma had always been beauty of women.

His hand had slacked on the reins. The bay took the opportunity, pretended to bolt. The next five minutes were pretty fencing. They ended when the big bay, mastered again, took a scrubby hedge with the smooth skim of a gull and checked sharply on the other side at the unexpected sight of a ragged girl gathering sticks not five feet away.

"'Ware, lass; 'ware!" cried John Custyn, the words jounced out of him by the sudden swerve of the bay. Then, "There!"—as he gentled his horse. "Ods-fish, though, my dear, you had best thank your stars for Lansquenet's good manners. Had you been two yards nearer the hedge—" And there he stopped.

The ragged girl had stood up. She was looking at him direct, the sudden scare dying out of her face, color coming instead.

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She was clad in a long garment of sacking, her feet poked through broken shoes, but in her face and in every slight stir of her body were such grace and beauty and gentleness as are never given together except in the supremest measure.

Down her back her heavy hair hung in two long plaits—gold none who saw could imagine as ever growing dim—a shining weight.

"Who *are* you?" said John Custyn in a gasp, all his elaborate manners blown from him like dust at the surprising sight of her. He was flushed from taming his horse—he rode his horse easily—gallant in person, gallantly dressed. He must have been as splendid a sight to her as if a painted coat of arms had suddenly taken on life.

She did not answer.

"Who are you?" he repeated, his poise coming back to him, "For if no Phyllis neat—heigh-ho!—'faith, I swear 'tis most impertinent of me, mistress—but an I be not mistook, you gather sticks on my lands."

The girl flushed deeply at his patronizing courtesy.

"You are mistook," she said. "This is Barrow Chase, my fine gentleman."

"Is it so?" said John Custyn, and laughed a little. "Well, and then, my charming young pastoral, I will even invite you, for your good, to gather sticks on the other side of the hedge, where the sticks are mine. For, from all report, the master of Barrow Chase would grudge you even the least of his twigs; whereas I, dear creature——"

Then her scornful voice broke the false sentence like brittle glass.

"The master of Barrow Chase is Geoffrey Barrow, my father, since you be so curious," she answered composedly. "And I am Elizabeth Barrow."

He was off his horse in an instant, but she did not see him. She was looking at her dress instead—and very near tears. It had always clad her sufficiently before—and she had accepted dutifully her father's dictum that that was enough. Now, for some reason, it became suddenly intolerable to her. She stood looking down, her eyes blinking.

John Custyn approached her, doffing his hat, no mockery left in the gesture or the words that accompanied it.

"I cry you mercy," he said—antiquely, no doubt, but his voice was honest. "Dear maid, I do sue for your pardon. Will you not forgive?"

Her trouble passed like a shower.

"Why, yes, sir—an you be honest repentant," she answered, lifting her eyes.

They talked then. He even stooped to gether fresh sticks for her—a satiric familiar pinching him somewhere in his mind, tittering in his mind like an actress at the sight of Sir Fribble Fopling turned woodcutter. For the first time in many years he attempted to silence that familiar. This moment was better than satire, oddly enough.

"Your father is a gentleman of whose acquaintance I have long been envious," he said deftly, in a pause over binding her faggot.

"I will take you to him now—an you desire it," she said directly at once.

He looked at her very sharply, but her eyes were perfectly calm. He remembered an elaborate rimed attack of his on the "innocence" of women with profound distaste. "I would stake my life she has neither guile nor greed," he thought, with a sudden romanticism that amazed him, that stirred him wholly as if he were a beaten drum—and, as he thought, laughed out aloud like a boy.

From the door of his house Geoffrey Barrow saw them coming slowly up the overgrown road between the long alley of trees. John Custyn led the bay, and beside him walked golden Bessie, the sun in her hair.

They were talking together, and the bay walked where he pleased for all the trouble John Custyn took to guide him. Geoffrey Barrow drew his breath in sharply as he saw them so, and his mouth was more satisfied than if he had died in peace, and his eyes were glinting and eager, like bright coins in the dark.

THE huge, lumbering coach lurched heavily from rut to rut of the muddy road. But John Custyn still had the campaigner's gift for sleeping whenever opportunity offered. He called upon it now—cushioned himself as best he could in one corner of the great, unwieldy vehicle—prepared for a doze. An hour yet, at the least, before they would reach the inn where they were to break their journey. But before

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he closed his eyes definitively he opened them wider than ever for an instant, to have one last look at his countess.

She was curled in the opposite corner, sleeping as easily as if she lay on down. What youth she had, he thought, with the completest gratitude. What beauty she had, now her first maid's beauty had given just place to a kind of tender maturity even fairer, a hesitating, delightful assumption of love and marriage that seemed to breathe from her like odor, like honeysuckle scent! Her hair had come loose—it was golden all over her shoulders—within it she, too, was golden, as something light and immortal created on one clear morning from sun and the golden foam. In her sleep, too, she must be remembering a happiness, for she smiled. John Custyn closed his eyes contentedly. Every day of the year since their marriage—happiness, happiness—a falling of brilliant leaves from a clear sky, each leaf warm with delight like a color, like a color of gold, like her!

BUT the sleep did not come to him at once; his body was too pleasant with thought. Pictures ran behind his shut eyes—a multitude of pictures. Pictures of doubt, of politic doubt of what counties would say and wits, of doubt of himself, of ill remembrance of what he had been before ever he saw the golden Bessie. Pictures of certainty, driving them away as he found alive in himself, to startle him wholly, a shifting of all his attitudes of mind and thought so mighty that it was as if the very blood in his veins had gone back to first youth—Bessie's face, Bessie's eyes, Bessie's lips as, gradually, all his satire shredded away from him, and he realized, with a humility that seemed strange to his soul, that nothing done or been in the past was to make any difference—that all that mattered was what was yet left for Bessie and himself to do. Pictures of Bessie again, her trust, her dear childishness, her impenitent joy in loving and being loved, her girl's delight in the pretty things he gave her. "Oh, the golden Bessie!" he thought, with his heart as hot as a ballad-singer's.

Then his lips shut down. There was one dark picture, too.

A white-haired man in rags on a ragged bed. A dying man whose breath came hard through his lips, whose hands gripped at his tattered covering with excruciating strength, as if they would pull him back to life again in spite of all fate. At the bedside, golden Bessie and John Custyn, her husband, Countess and Earl of Camlet.

The dry lips unclosed. The voice came wavering, shaking, from Death's very throat.

"Bessie, Bessie, my daughter, my own true daughter!"

"Yes, father; yes!"

"I cannot see you, my daughter. Are you beside me?"

"Yes, father. Truly I am here."

The voice strengthened.

"The packet, Bessie—the packet in my breast. There is a writing there. It tells all— all the secret hiding-holes—all—my—wealth!"

"Oh, father, father!"

"It is yours, my daughter. All is yours."

The head sank back on the pillow; the voice stopped. When it spoke again, it was wandering, though still strong.

"It is time to make your responses, Bessie, my daughter."

"Father—not now!"

"It is time to make your responses, my golden Bessie," the unappeasable voice went on.

The weak hands went to the breast, came away again, made a fumbling gesture of counting down coins.

John Custyn bit at his lip—this had gone too far. He glanced at Bessie anxiously—dying father or no, he would not have her thus tortured. But for the first time since he had known her she did not return his glance. Her eyes were bound to her father's, very large, very still. A change had come over her—she had never seemed so removed. Her voice, as she answered her father, had the calm, obliterating arrogance of one who shares with one other a secret as proud and deadly as a poisoned gem.

"What is this, Bessie?" quavered the dying man.

"Gold, father"—very clearly. "It is gold."

"And this?"

"Gold."

"And this—this—this?"—with a dreadful hurry to cheat Death himself from the last word.

"Gold. They are all pure gold." Her young voice had the cold ring of metals—smooth metals alien to all living flesh.

Everybody's Magazine, June, 1923

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"Is it to be spent?" The voice rose like wind before a storm.

"No."

"Is it to be lent?"

"Never."

The voice shrilled, victorious,

"Then what, what, what shall we do with it, golden Bessie?"

"Keep it, father; keep it! Never let it go."

Her triumph answered his triumph. They stared at each other, true father, true daughter now.

Then the body on the bed was shaken with a gust of noiseless, approving laughter—and then it tightened all over and as suddenly lay slack.

WHEN John Custyn, much shaken, led golden Bessie away from her grief, it was back to their house and another grief to come that was to bind them closer than ever. For, the following morning, the son whose coming both had so desired was born prematurely—and dead.

John Custyn, very disturbed, put that picture away, though not without some highly unforgiving wishes as to the present abode of Geoffrey Barrow. The cursed miser had done his best to make his daughter in his own image, he thought, with hate. And—God be praised!—he had failed. It was true that Bessie had shown, for a loving woman, an uncommon obstinacy in praying that he keep the treasure gleaned from Barrow House as it had been found—in gold. But that meant nothing—nor the fact that in her dress she always preferred gold ornaments before any jewels. He was rich enough for both—she could make ducks and drakes of her dowry, and it amused her.

His mind turned hurriedly toward more ordinary things. This journey to London—a royal "request" where there could be no disobedience. That must have come sooner or later—they were lucky to have had one year at Camlet in peace. But, for all that, he looked forward to the court with little pleasure. It was not alone the manners of that court—or the foes he had there—but appearing before his old companions as Benedick most unfashionably in love with his wife—he and Bessie the seven days' wonder for any idle impertinent to quiz and eye like savages from the colonies. That would not be pleasant—he had thought himself done with all that. "Cophetua Custyn and his golden beggar maid"—he could hear their tongues wag now. And his uncle, the smooth bishop, would be there, with that son, his cousin, who had been the likeliest next Earl of Camlet before John Custyn married—ods-fish!

He opened his eyes again troubledly, saw Bessie. For a long time he looked at Bessie, and as he looked the trouble left his face. Softly his eyes began to close again; his body relaxed for sleep.

As they were going to bed in the inn that night, he stood with his coat off, counting some money puzzledly.

"God's ransom!" he swore, then, with a nod at Bessie, who sat brushing her hair, "Your pardon, madam, but my hour's drowse in the coach has cost me a golden guinea."

The smooth stroke of the brush hesitated for an instant, but then went on.

"And why so, sir?"—in the clearest of unworried voices.

John Custyn laughed shamefacedly.

"Ah, sweet, I sound like a pedler, do I not? For the reason that a guinea must have dropped from my pocket as I lay drowsing— Oh, 'tis no use inquiring. The coachman hath it by now, no doubt, and will swear he has never seen such a thing in all his days. Still, an it teaches me to carry my coins in a purse like thine, 'twill be money saved." And he laughed again.

"I will knit you a purse like mine, sweet," said Bessie, brushing her hair. "But I would question the coachman, too, for 'tis sin to loose a whole guinea," she added, in a way that jarred him a little.

"Oh, let the rogue have it. The road was rough enough to-day," he said, with a slight stiffness of manner. Then, to make up for it, picking up a feminine trifle of netted green silk that lay on the table: "So this is your treasury, Countess? Faith, 'tis better stocked than my pockets! One, two, three, seven guineas, and one that hath James his head. I did not know you had a guinea of James, Countess?"

"It is one of my father's," said Bessie, brushing her hair. "Sweet, give me the purse, for I must put it away," she added, with a charming smile.

He bowed and gave it. The incident was ended. But surely he had seen her count the coins idly on the journey—and there

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had been but six guineas. And when he had wakened that afternoon, it had been to find her awake. These thoughts were very unworthy. With a sudden rush of penitence he went over to her and kissed her.

All the same, it was with more anxiety in his manner than the fatigue of the journey warranted that he got into bed. When she came, too, he saw that she had a cord about her throat. Hanging from it, against her warm breast, was the purse with the guineas.

"YOU are hurt! You are hurt!" And Bessie's fingers were at the stained sleeve in an instant, gently stripping it back. Bessie's eyes looked away with a shudder from the red, welling puncture that disfigured the white skin. Then she ran for water and bandages. John Custyn did not reply till she was back again, dabbing at the wound with a wet cloth, applying the salve, the bandages, her voice making little sorry, encouraging sounds as her fingers worked skilfully and firmly. Then,

"Not greatly," he said in a voice tired past endurance. "Mountford is worse."

"Lord Mountford?"

"I ran him through the body—an he dies I have murder on my soul," said John Custyn grimly. "Oh, I am no boy. I have killed in duel and battle before—but never in duel where my foe had all the right of it," he added, with great bitterness, drawing his but half-bandaged arm away stiffly from under Bessie's fingers.

"Do not stir so, my lord, my dear lord—oh, my dear, you hurt your poor arm! Oh, John—you must not rise yet! You are weak—weak and fevered."

"I am not fevered." And John Custyn had risen, his face gray iron, his voice very cold. "I am not fevered, but I had best get to my feet, I think, for what I have to say to you. The arm is well enough, mistress. Let it be!"

"John, John! 'Mistress,' to me! I am no one strange—no mistress—only your Bessie."

"Aye; so I see," said John Custyn, swaying as he stood. "Well, my Bessie, since you will, I have a slight tale to tell you—about this arm.

"Lord Charles Mountford has a golden snuff-box—or had it—a foppish toy. Oh, do not start so; do not whiten so like a play-actress ready to swoon—there is no ghost here, my Bessie, only your husband. When Mountford dined here three nights ago, he had this snuff-box, I say.

"He passed it around the table for all to admire—a silly popinjay, Lord Charles—I have never liked the man. All saw it; all flattered it—you too, my Bessie, my honorable wife. Dost remember how you would hardly give it up to Captain Tyncombe—it was such a gentle toy? Dost remember, indeed?"

The woman had sunk down into the chair now, her hands over her face. The voice of the man went on, toneless as an oracle's, mocking as a clown's.

"When Lord Charles took his leave of this, our house, he had not the snuff-box—he had laid it down somewhere, mislaid it no doubt—as other guests at our house have mislaid other trinkets, such as guineas and scarves with gold thread in them, and even gold rings. It is odd—is it not, my Bessie?—that, in spite of all our searchings and questionings of servants, these things have never been found—oh, devilish odd!"

His voice cackled suddenly with laughter. He slapped his knee with his hand.

"So Lord Charles—and this is the merriest part of all, my dear Countess—oh, 'tis laughable past all words! Lord Charles, I say, sets a witty rumor afloat that it is you—'old griping Barrow's fair miser' as he merrily dubbed you—who stole his paltry snuff-box, as you had stolen the gewgaws and rings of others, all for no reason except the base love of all that is gold."

He cackled again, then sobered to deathly earnestness.

"Laughable, eh? A court jest better than madcap Rochester's prank with the tweezers that drove the frail Ransom mad?

"I found Charles Mountford and gave him the lie direct. We fought—he lies at death's door—he will not repeat his jest. But, oh, Bessie, Bessie"—and the man's voice broke out suddenly into blinding pain as his countess knelt before him, clutching his knees—"oh, Bessie, but I would have taken his sword in my heart with such joy instead—if he had lied!"

The woman at his feet, nothing left of the child any more in aspect or gesture, all crouching, unhappy woman, looked up at him with the eyes of a beaten spaniel.

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"How did you know?" she whispered. "Oh, how did you know?"

"I have thought of it till I could not sleep these last weeks," he said heavily. "And always I have mastered the thought, for I loved you true. But yesterday afternoon—while you were away—I had heard of Mountford's tale—it was in me like venom — I put mine honor aside and searched in your room. It was there—in a drawer—wrapped up in a handkerchief—not even well hidden. Oh, Bessie, Bessie!"

"John—oh, my dear, dear husband, I am guilty! I am very guilty! It was bright and winked at me—the gold. It wanted to come to me—it knew I would keep it safe—never spend—never lend—keep always—the gold—I—I—" And she sobbed heartbrokenly. "Not for the gain—we are rich; there was no need. The gold only—my father taught me so. So, John, but I *could* not help it—I could not—and now I have hurt you so——"

"The hurt is nothing," said John Custyn desolately. "But I gave you my honor, mistress—to hold and keep. I have reason to repent of much in my life, but of nothing touching my honor. That you have shamed. It will not wipe off."

"Not even with blood, John?" She was offering him her breast. "Not even with this blood?"

He looked at her—a long second—pitiably.

"Not even with that," he said slowly; then, gently thrusting her hands from his knees, he turned on his heel and walked from the room, back bent.

THE court marveled at how John Custyn braved it. Such a humming scandal had not been known for years—the sly toast of "the golden Bessie," followed by a ceremonious taking of snuff was the jest of the hour. Some said that Custyn and his countess intended to ruffle it through till the gossip died; some that he had asked the king permission to retire to his estates—a permission refused on the unspoken ground that such rare entertainment as he furnished at the moment could not be allowed to die. Golden Bessie kept a hoard of guineas sewn in her gown—golden Bessie and her miser father had lived for years on a diet of leaves and grass. At private meals in Camlet House the only service that could be used was one of pewter for, if any rarer metal appeared in so much as a spoon, golden Bessie had it stolen before one could wink an eye—so the gossip ran.

Having carefully sifted all which gossip, the worthy Bishop of Perchester, John Custyn's uncle and next of kin, took it upon himself to pay his nephew a suitable visit of condolence.

The bishop was a tall, hearty man of a portly, impressive presence, except for his eyes, which were small and narrow and eager like a fox's—a person of much bland experience in walking on egg-shells without breaking them. But, for all that, he was glad enough when the ticklish preliminaries of his visit were over and he had discovered that he might allude to the Countess of Camlet's infirmity, if he did it smoothly enough, without being shown the door.

"It is very sad," he said, sighing and watching his nephew closely. From the haggard wildness of that nephew's appearance he could gratifyingly predict, unless matters mended shortly, an unhappy event not very far away which would bring the earldom of Camlet to him or his gawky son.

"Very sad," he repeated vaguely. "Of course, an my poor spiritual services—the Church——"

"Could do nothing," said John Custyn shortly. His uncle's eyes upon him gave him an uncomfortable twinge—a memory of a phrase about "waiting for dead men's shoes."

"No; I suppose they could not. We do not claim the pretended powers of the Romish Church in exorcism," purred the Bishop of Perchester. "And yet it is very lamentable. Now, if I were to advise—advise—" He let the words float away.

"Your advice is ever welcome, uncle," said John Custyn impatiently.

"Well then—well—and as your countess has seemed, in all my acquaintance with her, a most admirable, charming lady——"

"She is perfect in all ways but one," said Custyn rather huskily. Then he laughed without humor. "But life is not bearable sans honor," he said.

"There is honor and honor," said the bishop weightily, testing his steps—this was dangerous ground. A man whose breath still caught like that when he spoke of his wife might yet be very easily reconciled to

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her by some slight accident. With that thought, the earldom that had been so close to the bishop drifted away again, a gilded bubble that fled.

"And for the good of the succession—since your countess had not as yet provided you with an heir——"

"An heir!" said Custyn shrewdishly. "Let heirs go hang! I shall have no heirs now, uncle."

The bishop glowed pleasantly within him at this speech. But one must make sure—hate and love were too near akin.

"I should suggest a reconcilement—for the good of our house," he said smoothly.

The proposition so put could not go far from infuriating John Custyn. But, instead, John Custyn received it with surprising calm.

"If I could only believe—if only I were sure of the future—" he muttered brokenly. "If——"

So that was how the land lay! Even better so.

"She is very young," said the bishop.

"God knows she is young!"

"Have you ever seen a young child cured of greediness after sweets?" said the bishop cautiously. "They give it naught but sweets—rub its nose in the honey-pot. It gorges—it ails—it is not greedy again."

"Yes, uncle; yes!"

"Or the Grecian fable of Midas? Or that Italian tale of the gilded man?"

"What tale, sir?"

"Oh, 'twas of a miser, nephew." John Custyn shuddered. "A man whose sole end was gold. His fame came to the prince. The prince conversed with him; disgusted by his avarice, he had him gilded."

"*Gilded?*"

"All over his body, with fine gold leaf and made him walk in the streets, so gilded, for days on end. It so sated the rogue with gold and showed him the vulgarity of his avarice that he never hoarded again. Like cures like, nephew."

"But this tale of the gilded miser—is it true? Ods-fish! What a singular cure!"

"True history, nephew—'tis all in Guicciardini his book. Well, 'tis all the advice I have for you."

"I am grateful, uncle." But Custyn's eyes were abstracted—he was obviously still considering the doctrine of like cures like and the gilded man.

As the bishop observed, he felt satisfied again. Those eyes were too eager for the eyes of one wholly sane. He rose.

"I must take my leave for the present."

They exchanged politenesses. Then, just as the bishop was going, John Custyn spoke, with some difficulty, for he was a proud man.

"You will not discover this to others, uncle," he said. "But my wife—I have a promise from her—it is nearly a month now—we give a ball three nights hence—the promise runs over that night. So far it has been kept, I hope—" He stopped.

"I am joined with you in that hope," said his uncle elaborately. "Though I fear an it were I, I should look for more stringent remedies than promises. Like cures like," he repeated softly.

Then he had made his adieux and was going down the stairs.

John Custyn stood by the door of the chamber, his body hag-ridden, his mind going wearily over the strange incident of the gilded man.

He heard greetings exchanged on the stairs between his uncle and some woman—Bessie. She must have returned. He would go and speak with her.

His uncle's voice came to him through the open door, courteous as ever, but this time a little high.

"Oh, no, my dear Countess; you should not trouble about it. 'Tis but a trifle, though of gold. My son valued it solely, since it was from his mother. Do not question your servants, I pray you. They would not remember. 'Twas lost three days gone or more."

He did not hear Bessie's answer. He had no wish to hear more.

His step, as he passed through the door, was the step of a sick man; his eyes smarted weakly.

He turned to the left along the long gallery as Bessie came up the stairs, going toward the room he had once been used to paint in, where some of his painter's tools were still kept.

THE last ball given at Camlet House in John Custyn's time was a masquerade of singular magnificence. The king had declared his intent of honoring it, even to the point of disguising his royal person. Gossip could play as it liked with golden Bessie; John Custyn was still Earl of Camlet.

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In curiosity, therefore, in languid tribute to the Custyn bravado, with ennui hoping for diversion, a king; with dubious expectations under a smooth countenance, a bishop; with laughter, many; with any sympathy or pity, none, the masks arrived, began to crowd on the steps of Camlet House.

Those arriving first were not shown directly to the great stairs leading to the ballroom, at whose head the earl and countess stood to welcome their friends. They were ushered into various antechambers—rejoined when their wraps had been laid aside and the ladies' complexions freshened—formed, jesting and tittering, into a sort of loose column, four abreast, by two gray footmen with silver wands. Then, when it was time, the doors that gave on the ballroom staircase were thrown open. From a hidden gallery four trumpets sang out on the instant a marching-air. The music caught the foremost—almost automatically they started to tramp up the stairs, and after followed the whole winding, vivid parade, sparkling with jewels, gay with color, climbing the stairs like a dragon made out of bright silks.

But half-way up the stairs that first wave of masquerade halted—for a single instant but halted—as its components saw their hostess and host. A gasp ran down the column like sparks down a fuse—a gasp that flared into words, into witty, drawling quips, into stifled laughter. They had jested long with John Custyn and his golden Bessie. Here stood greater insolence in answer, returning stroke for stroke, the very body of bravado, his counter-jest.

John Custyn, his face white as his hair-powder, his whole figure and bearing set and stiff, was clad from the points of his shoes to the lace at his hands and throat in black velvet, deep and soft as a black cat's fur. He was Night, unrelieved save where the diamond buckles on his shoes, the diamonds crusted on his sword-hilt, glittering in rings on his hands, were fiery as winter stars. But Bessie was golden Day.

Her body was dressed extravagantly in gold brocade so weighty and stiff it shone like bullion itself. Her shoes were gold and her stockings—gold as her golden hair. But that was the least of the wonder—it was not that took the breath. Her arms and the soft rise of her breast to the stately column of her throat, her fingers whiter than lilies, the colorful marvel of her face—these, too, were gold—the gold of a gilded image. From her heels to her hair she gleamed expressionless, unmortal, as if some ironic magic had taken her and changed her, changed every live cell in her body to gold and the dust of gold.

Like a ripple of teasing wind the comprehension of John Custyn's enormous insolence ran through all that great impudent assembly as it toiled up the stairs. They had mocked him very cleverly; they had taken her name of "the golden Bessie" and made it a tap-room joke. It was thus superbly he replied, with a satire to which their satire was the calling of names of a pack of dirty children. The reply was to their taste. There was not one that did not savor it exquisitely, with a damned appreciation. They could sting him no longer—not even the subtlest of them. He had thrown their own scorn back in their faces with a gesture so hugely brazen it dampened their every squib. They must give him best.

THE ball began—in a fashion strangely stately for a ball whose host was a noble, whose wife had stained his honor forever in all eyes genteel. It proceeded—the hours died under it like petals under the feet of a woodland dancer. The king came—and saw—and for once was speechless at a nine days' wonder. The music played; the dancers bowed to their partners. There was food and wine. And through all the bright, meaningless shimmer, like threads in a pattern still weaving, John Custyn moved with his lady, haughtier their pride. And both faces were masklike ever—the one stern with a bitterness keener than east wind; the other set as an idol's in its gilt disguise, but with eyes both brilliant and, in some strange manner, rapt, like the eyes of a penitent, pressing his breast on steel that the soul might go clean.

There was little gaiety that night in the hearts of any—the bubbles of mockery that kept these people willing to live had died from their minds like a fume of wine at their first sight of Bessie, bright in her golden mask. There was only a hastiness left—a scared, unacknowledged wish that went deeper than terror, to be always talking or moving or dancing or taking wine—lest, if the motion in the ballroom stopped for an instant, some incredible, ungentlemanly

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thing might happen—the sky crack above them with the noise of last judgment or golden Bessie suddenly halt where she walked, and stiffen and stand there, a gilded statue of stone.

So the night went past like fever, and dawn came on.

IT WAS just as dawn was beginning to seep through the drawn curtains in drippings of shadowy gray and tarnished pearl that the Bishop of Perchester managed to get speech alone with his nephew in the deserted supper-room. The bishop was a man of neither great sensitiveness of mind nor much pity, but the first sight of golden Bessie had chilled him like air blown over a new grave, and all through the eery frenzy of the ball, as the hours increased, he had been brought to think more and more unpleasantly, and at last with pure fear, of certain words he had spoken. The earldom of Camlet was a very great thing, no doubt, and never before in his life had he hesitated or demurred when a prize lay fair in his reach. But, when all was said and done, he had once had the rags of a conscience—and that conscience, like that of all cowards, made him balk and stumble when murder was taken bluntly out into action from the twilight regions of mere pleasant thought and desire.

He began by wishing reflectively that he had not thought it good for his nephew to overhear that extra lie as to his son's losing a gold trifle in Camlet House. But as the time grew toward dawn and the fear in the air grew no lighter, he was forced to consider himself and his ambitions with a strictness he seldom showed—and the task was not overpleasant, even for him. So it was with a sick relief that he saw John Custyn stride into the room where he had been fortifying himself with brandy, John Custyn's eyes staring ahead of him, as if they saw nothing of all that passed.

"Nephew," said the bishop timorously; "nephew!" and plucked at his sleeve.

John Custyn turned.

"What is it, mine uncle?" said he, and his voice was as cold as a voice that has left its body behind.

"Nephew," said the bishop, and shook like a jelly; "are you mad, nephew? Oh, nephew, are you mad?" He was shrill with fear.

John Custyn turned blank eyes on his uncle's pale face. He considered deeply.

"Why, no; I do not think so—wholly," he said—very awfully, it seemed, to that other man.

The bishop broke into a hurry of tormented speech.

"Then why this jest—this ghastliness, this devil's mockery? Why this show of your countess—gilded—ah, the poor child! Why——"

Again John Custyn looked at him, and his mouth was stopped.

"'Twas your advice—your very good advice, mine uncle," Custyn answered slowly. "For the dog returns to his vomit and the burnt child creeps back to the fire," he added, with an extremity of bitterness. "Well, uncle—we must take sure means to warn the child from the fire forever."

"But that—but I spoke but in jest!" groaned the bishop, panting. "But I did not mean—oh, may God help me, I did not! I never thought——"

"A wise jest," said John Custyn. "A most salutary jest."

"But, nephew—but she cannot *live!*" shrieked the weak and pitiful rogue in a squeak like a bat's.

John Custyn did not take the full meaning of his words at first. When he had their import, he was suddenly trembling all through his body.

"What mean you? What are you saying? Name of God, what?" he said in one hissing breath, his hands on the other's shoulders, clutching for the throat.

"I mean she will die!" squealed the other, sinking in the clutch. "I mean she will not live the day out unless you find her some remedy. The tale I told you—the tale of the gilded miser—I thought you would divine—God help me, I thought you saw the prince's intent——"

"How die?" said John Custyn, shaking him like a rat. "How die? And what intent?"

"Fool, the body breathes through the skin!" the bishop gasped. "It has a million mouths in the skin to breathe—'tis so we live. 'Tis not by the lungs alone. Shut those mouths with paint, with gilt, and how may the body endure? And then there are poisons in paints. The miser lived but two days—a strong man. Your wife is but woman—she will not live this day out unless—

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O God!" And he lapsed into articulate sounds, for John Custyn was throttling him.

But a second later the fingers had dropped from his throat. He crumpled to the floor, lay wheezing. From where he lay he heard a terrible sob shake Custyn's body. He saw John Custyn shiver with uttermost pain, his face drawn and frightful as if he had got his death.

"Where is my wife?" cried John Custyn furiously. "Where is my wife? Oh, Bessie, Bessie!"

A noise answered him from the ballroom —the confused noise of many people suddenly alarmed.

"The countess!" said the noise, "The countess! She has swooned—she is dying!" And over all the babble, one cool note, mocking, "Oh, golden Bessie's gone home!"

THEY had carried her to a couch in a side chamber—she lay there motionless. One golden arm and hand trailed down to the floor; the fingers relaxed, looking too heavy for life. Those that plied her with water and wine kept their eyes away from her face—it was too like a death-mask grimly painted, now the eyes were shut. John Custyn knelt by her side, his hands chafing her hand, striving dreadfully to bring warmth to what was so cold. He saw, as through dizzying mist, that his uncle was there also, trying feebly to force some wine through her teeth.

After time so long it could not be of this world he saw, with joy unspeakable, her eyelids tremble faintly. He gave a hoarse cry.

"She is living!" he cried. "She is living! Oh, Bessie, Bessie!"

At the sound of his voice, as if he had called her to return from a region so removed that each step back was great labor, she gave a long sigh, and again her eyelids trembled.

Now the bishop was able to pour some wine in her mouth. After another time her eyes unclosed.

They looked in the eyes of John Custyn with trust complete.

"My dear lord!" she said weakly.

Tears came to him, overmastering.

"Oh, Bessie, Bessie, and I—and my devil's punishment—I feared—I had killed——"

"It is nothing," she said. "It was nothing. It was just."

Her eyes closed again.

"Oh, Bessie, live!" he cried passionately. "Live, Bessie! Live, Bessie! Or I must die in my sin!"

The others crept out of the room—all but John Custyn and his uncle. They two stood over her as she lay, chafing her wrists, loosening her bodice that she might breathe easier—waiting.

A shudder ran through her body; the first faint stirring of life returned.

Her eyes opened again. This time they did not close.

"I will live—though you punish me even again for my great disobedience," she said.

"Disobedience! Oh, Bessie——"

He could not look at her face; his eyes fell to her throat, to her bodice. Where the laces of the bodice had been loosed the round of her bosom showed whitely, untouched with gold. Her eyes followed his. She smiled like a child convicted of great mischief.

"I could not bear it—to gild my whole body—" she whispered. "It was so cold on me, so deathly cold! And, moreover, dear lord"—she smiled again—"it was gold—and I could not waste it so," she confessed in a whisper.

But John Custyn had knelt beside her, crushing her hand to his breast.

"My sweet—oh, my sweet! Thank God!"

"But you must punish me, nevertheless," she said presently. "Though for some months I fear you must not," she added.

"Ah, Bessie, to fright me so!"

"It was not after my desire," she said. "But I could not mend it." He trembled. She put her hand on his cheek, with much love. "My lord," she said gravely, slowly, "I give you joy. My lord, I pray God this time I may give you a son. Nor shall I be concerned with gold for this poor body of mine any longer," she added. "It will all be his."

When John Custyn raised his head again, his uncle was gone from the room, gone softly and disgustedly like an old wicked cat that has seen the cream-pan it stretched for lifted on a sudden wholly beyond its reach. John Custyn looked about the room —they two alone were left there. Unfashionably, he took his golden Bessie close in his arms.

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A Novelette

Learning Business

In Which It Is Shown That the Practise of Mixing Love and Business Is Becoming More Universal—Perhaps More Successful

By E. R. Punshon

Illustrations by C. H. Taffs

SINCE he left school at the age of eighteen, Reggie Halstan's life had been divided into two unequal parts—the first, and briefer, devoted to cricket; the second, and longer, to war. Cricket he had almost entirely forgotten; war he remembered too well. Of no other single subject did he know enough either for memory or forgetfulness, and it was with the feeling of an unguided wanderer in an unknown country that he found himself, within a week of being "demobed," listening to the account of the present position and future prospects of Halstan & Company, of Egg Alley, Cheapside, as expounded by Mr. Thewn, the manager, in whose hands the sole direction of the concern had rested since the death of Reggie's father, the founder of the business, soon after the outbreak of the war.

"Sounds pretty blue," he commented when, at last, Mr. Thewn paused; for that things were, generally speaking, in a very bad way was the one fact that seemed to emerge clearly from the bewildering hail of facts and figures which the manager had thrown at his head.

"I felt it my duty," said Mr. Thewn, a tall, thin man, with heavy eyes and a clean-shaven face, "to put the matter as plainly as possible. That is why I had this special balance-sheet drawn up, so that you could see at a glance exactly how things stand."

As he spoke he tapped with his long, lean forefinger one of the papers in the pile littering the table at which they sat, and mechanically Reggie picked it up and looked vaguely at the two parallel rows of figures which, he knew, revealed at a glance to those who understood exactly how the business stood but which conveyed to him just nothing at all.

"By Jove!" he said presently. "That's jolly curious, isn't it?"

"What?" asked Mr. Thewn, a little surprised that Reggie understood the figures sufficiently well to find anything about them either curious or anything else.

"Perhaps you hadn't noticed," said Reggie; "but the totals on both sides are the same exactly—the same to a penny."

The glance Mr. Thewn threw at him when he said this was almost savage in its contempt.

"The figures are meant to agree," he said curtly. "That's what they are for."

"Oh!" said Reggie, flushing a little, feeling he had made a mistake and floundering further into the morass. "Oh, I see; but—er—is that quite—square? Isn't it rather like—well, faking the thing?"

"This balance-sheet isn't faked," retorted Mr. Thewn. "It would probably show better results if it were."

He made not the least attempt to explain, and it was more his manner than his words

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that made Reggie realize he had been guilty of an unpardonable blunder.

He felt he was flushing to the roots of his hair, and he almost—but not quite—wished himself back in muddy trenches with the playful shrapnel bursting near and the gay high explosive rollicking round.

With what he intended to be an impressive air, he laid the balance-sheet down.

"I will go into it thoroughly later on," he said. But the only effect of this brave declaration was to draw a palpable sneer from Mr. Thewn, who remarked crushingly,

"Yes, Mr. Halstan; I would if I were you."

"You know, all this is a bit of a facer," Reggie went on, half to himself. "But out at the front we always thought every one at home was making pots of money."

"The business has suffered," answered Mr. Thewn coldly, "and suffered severely, from having no responsible head. I have done my best, but a manager is not a proprietor or a partner and has not the same influence or authority."

THIS was the invariable explanation Mr. Thewn offered when Reggie expressed any surprise over the fact that the business his father had built up and left in such a flourishing condition had, during these five years of war, drifted perilously near bankruptcy. Nor was there any mistaking the tone of bitter resentment in which the manager spoke and which made Reggie feel distinctly uncomfortable. For he knew well that Mr. Thewn considered he ought to have been taken into partnership,but almost the last letter Reggie had received from his father had contained a warning that was almost a command to do nothing of the sort.

"Thewn is competent and energetic and an excellent man of business," old Mr. Halstan had written in the last letter he ever wrote to his son, "and he will do well under your strict supervision. But never take him into partnership."

This injunction Reggie had not felt he could ignore, even though he knew that Mr. Thewn felt very strongly on the point, and though he was also well aware that the clause: "Under your strict supervision" bore, as things had turned out, an intensely ironic significance, and one that went far to nullify old Mr. Halstan's last command.

"Oh, well," he said drearily; "I suppose we must just put our backs into it and try to shove the old thing up again where she belonged while father was alive."

"No doubt," agreed Mr. Thewn smoothly, "matters will improve now there is once more a responsible head of affairs on the spot."

The bitterness of the tone was unmistakable, but Reggie gave no sign of having noticed it. He felt allowance must be made for the manager's not unnatural sense of injury.

"I shall have to depend a lot on you, Thewn," he said, looking full at him. "Is there anything you can suggest?"

"There is, of course, the offer from the Mottram people," remarked Mr. Thewn.

"Oh, yes," agreed Reggie, and fidgeted aimlessly in the litter of documents before him. "They offer to buy us up for ten thousand, don't they?"

"Yes," said Mr. Thewn.

"What do you think?" asked Reggie.

"I think," answered Mr. Thewn, "it is entirely for you to decide. We of the staff"—his tone was acid as he said this—"are hardly concerned. Miss Mottram would carry on the business much as before, and I have no doubt she would be willing to keep us all on."

Now, indeed, he hardly troubled to conceal the hostility and resentment that sounded in his voice, and Reggie, who had, at least during five long years of war, learned to judge men, began to realize that his manager was also his enemy.

A feeling of extraordinary helplessness came over him. He knew so little; he understood so little; his experience was so limited. He felt like a child playing amidst forces of which it knew nothing.

"Miss Mottram? Did you say, '*Miss* Mottram'?" Reggie asked.

"Yes," answered Thewn. "Mr. Mottram has practically retired, and Miss Mottram controls the business now—and controls it very well. There isn't a smarter man of business in the City, or one who knows more."

Reggie permitted himself a moment of envious admiration for this unknown woman who was so smart and capable and who knew as much as any business man in the City.

"And it is she who is offering to buy us up?" he remarked.

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"She says she will give ten thousand spot cash for the business as a going concern," answered Mr. Thewn.

Reggie understood that Mr. Thewn both wished and hoped for the acceptance of the offer.

"Ten thousand is a lot of money," he said thoughtfully, and he reflected that with that amount of capital one could go to one of the colonies and make a good start, in a new country, in a new land, far away from all mysterious, puzzling things like balance-sheets, away from all this atmosphere of doubt and suspicion that he felt round him on every side like a fog.

"It's a good offer," observed Mr. Thewn. "Better than bankruptcy."

In spite of himself, Reggie jumped in his chair, and he wondered what his father would have thought if he could have foreseen that within five years of his death that word "bankruptcy" would come to be pronounced in connection with the business he had been so proud of.

"I must think it over," Reggie said aloud. "It was the Mottram people, wasn't it, who got the Scottish Supply contract we had so long?"

"Yes," agreed Mr. Thewn; "they have always been our chief rivals. And they have got a share now of the Jackson connection. If they secure much more of it, we may as well put up the shutters—and then the business would not be worth ten thousand pence."

"Then you think I ought to accept?"

"It would be safer—perhaps it would be the most prudent thing to do," answered Mr. Thewn slowly. "But it is for you to decide. At any rate, it would do no harm to call on Miss Mottram. She is a very remarkable woman, and a chat with her need not bind you in any way."

This advice seemed good to Reggie.

"Right-o! I will," he said. "I'll go and lunch now, and then I'll drop round there before I come back."

He nodded and presently took his departure, and as soon as he had gone Mr. Thewn went to his private telephone and rang up Mottram's.

"I want Miss Mottram herself," he said. "Is that Miss Mottram? Our young man is coming round to see you after lunch. I think he is prepared to sell out, but if you hold back a little and don't seem too eager, I think you can get the business for half your offer or less."

"For five thousand?" repeated Miss Mottram's voice. Evidently she was a good deal surprised, and it was with almost a note of remonstrance that she added, "Why, it's worth that ten times over!"

"To us it is," agreed Thewn. "And once we have it in our hands we can soon make it worth double and treble that. But to this young slacker it's worth nothing—it's a charity to give him anything at all. We ought to let it go into bankruptcy and then buy it for a few hundreds. He is simply the most utter young fool I ever met—why—" And, with a giggle, Mr. Thewn repeated the story of the balance-sheet and of Reggie's unlucky wonder that both sides thereof corresponded to a penny.

Miss Mottram laughed heartily, her merriment thin and clear over the line.

"But is that true?" she asked.

"Oh, perfectly! I'm not exaggerating in the least," Thewn answered. "The boy's a regular rotter, and we've a soft thing on. You needn't give a penny more than five thousand—less if you like. If he shies at all, hint at bankruptcy and mention that you have already a good share of the Jackson connection. There is the Singapore United Planters' Agency, too—tell him you are thinking of bidding for that. Oh, you can soon bring him to heel, I can tell you, a young fool like that!"

"We don't want to skin him too close," said the voice over the 'phone doubtfully. "It doesn't look well to go too near the bone. I'll give him five thousand anyhow, if only out of charity."

"All right," answered Thewn, and as he hung up the receiver he muttered: "Charity indeed! Charity begins at home. Anyhow, if Mottram's buy the concern at such a bargain-price, I shall have earned the directorship they promise me."

ABOUT half-past four that afternoon the 'phone-bell rang again, however, and Miss Mottram's voice inquired ill-temperedly:

"Are you there? Is that Mr. Thewn? Are you alone? Young Halstan has not been in yet."

"No; I know," Thewn answered, his voice very ruffled and angry. "The youngster is a bigger fool even than I thought—he has just got back, and he told me in the calmest

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way in the world that he met a pal at lunch and they had a game of billiards together till it got so late he thought he would put off seeing you till to-morrow. Billiards! That's his idea of business—billiards!"

"Perhaps it's as well," said Miss Mottram calmly. "We have just landed another big order from Jackson's. When he does come, I can mention that casually. It will help him to make up his mind to sell."

"I don't believe he has a mind to make up," growled Thewn, as he hung up the receiver. And, indeed, how was he to know that the brilliant raid Reggie had planned and carried out on the German trenches before Arras and that won him his company and the D. S. O. had been thought out during a long afternoon he had spent playing billiards at a certain rest-camp?

IT WAS in a somewhat nervous and apprehensive mood that Reggie, the next afternoon, paid his postponed visit to Mottram's, the firm which his father had so often met and beaten in fair and open competition, but to which it seemed that hard necessity was now about to compel him to surrender.

"The dad would be awfully cut up if he knew," Reggie found himself thinking, dismally enough.

But all that morning he had seemed to be listening to one tale of disaster after another as on every side Mr. Thewn showed where they had lost ground, nor had the manager seemed to feel anything but a gloomy satisfaction as he piled proof upon proof of the precarious condition of the business—the Scottish contract gone, the Jackson connection going, the Singapore Planters' Supply threatened. Such was the tune on which Mr. Thewn had played adroit variations all the forenoon, till Reggie had come to feel that he hardly ought to expect Mottram's to be willing to give anything at all for the business, since it seemed that, in getting it, they would get little more than they had already except a mass of complicated losses to liquidate as cheaply as possible.

At Mottram's, it seemed he was expected, but he was kept waiting for nearly twenty minutes before being admitted to the presence of Miss Mottram, the wait being designed to produce in him a proper sense of his unimportance. Then he was informed by a pert youth—one who looked, Reggie thought, as if six months in the ranks would improve him out of all recognition—that Miss Mottram was now at liberty and would see him, and as he followed his guide down a long corridor to Miss Mottram's private room, he had an odd memory of a tall German officer he had once seen meekly following the little cockney to whom he had surrendered along a deep trench on his way to headquarters. It seemed to him he also had surrendered, and was following his captor, to be shown in triumph to the victorious commander, and then his guide stopped before a door marked "Private" and opened it for Reggie to pass through.

He found himself in a large, well-lighted room, furnished in a strictly businesslike style, without a trace of feminine fripperies such as he had half expected to see. At a large writing-table in the center of the room, covered with papers in orderly array, sat a woman, middle-aged, very plainly dressed, her hair brushed tightly back from her forehead, her features thin and sharp, and with as little trace of gentleness or refinement showing in them as was displayed by the room in which she sat.

"Hard as nails," was Reggie's instant thought as he saw her. "Put her in khaki and she would make a first-class R. S. M."

She looked up as he entered, nodded in curt greeting and, pointing to a chair, said in a harsh, abrupt voice:

"Young Mr. Halstan, isn't it? Pleased to see you. Sit down. Try a cigar. I can recommend them. I smoke them myself."

"Oh, thanks so awfully!" said Reggie, lowering himself into the indicated chair and becoming vaguely aware of another presence in the room, that of some one seated at a small table near the window and busily engaged bending over a writing-pad. That this form was that of another woman he was dimly conscious, but his mind was too full of his errand and his attention too much occupied with Miss Mottram for him to have any thoughts to spare for this third occupant.

Indeed, he forgot all about her as he lit his own cigar and watched Miss Mottram light hers. When she had it well alight, she leaned back in her chair and, looking at him through the cloud of smoke she puffed out, said briskly,

"Well, young gentleman, I suppose you've called about our offer to buy your business."

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This was the second time she had called him "young," and Reggie did not like it. Also, he didn't like her, and he didn't like her harsh, snappy voice, or her manner, or anything about her—except, indeed, her cigars, which were excellent. But he remembered that business is not a matter of personal likes and dislikes, and, besides, beggars—and after his morning's talk with Mr. Thewn he felt exceedingly like a beggar—can't be choosers. So it was meekly enough that he answered:

"Mr. Thewn showed me your letter. He thought I might as well come round and see you about it."

Miss Mottram's cold eyes flickered with a quick scorn. The boy would be easy to deal with, she thought. Mr. Thewn this; Mr. Thewn that—evidently young Halstan had no mind of his own.

"Frankly," she began—and she was one of those people who always begin "Frankly" when they contemplate some specially gross deception—"things have changed since we wrote that letter. Of course we should have been bound by it if you had accepted at once. Luckily for us you didn't. The sum we mentioned was ten thousand, wasn't it?"

"Yes," answered Reggie gloomily. "I know six or seven years ago my father refused even to consider a much large offer."

"I dare say," snapped Miss Mottram in her abrupt, harsh voice. "But this is to-day, not six or seven years ago. And what we are buying is the business to-day—not the business of six or seven years ago. Frankly, I don't see how we can possibly give more now than half our previous offer."

"Half?" repeated Reggie in tones of utter dismay. "Oh, I say!"

"Frankly," added Miss Mottram, "we are not very keen on your accepting. I am not sure the business is worth anything. If we buy, it is only the name we shall pay for."

"Oh, the name!" said Reggie, and remembered that Mr. Thewn had remarked that morning that the firm's name was about the best asset left to them.

"Of course, I haven't seen your balance-sheet," Miss Mottram went on. "But I doubt if it will show very satisfactory results this year. I don't know if you have had one drawn up. If not, do so. When you come to look at it you won't see much shown there that my firm need be anxious to acquire. If you compare it with our results— I asked Miss Selwyn to take the figures out of the books to-day. Miss Selwyn, have you that balance-sheet?"

THE figure at the table by the window rose, and Reggie saw it was that of a small, thin girl, with a thin face, of which the most prominent features were the eyes, large, dark and very clear, and the firm little mouth. Except for the beauty of the large and mournful eyes, not one feature of the girl's face even approached prettiness, nor was her complexion good, and as for her hair, it was tucked away into the tightest and closest of glossy bands. Yet the total effect of the face seemed to Reggie curiously charming, with a quiet and wistful appeal that was all its own. But it was not all this that he thought of at the moment; indeed, he hardly noticed her looks at all, so much was he impressed by the apparent fact that this frail little slip of a thing seemed to be able to deal with the dark mysteries of balance-sheets as with familiar friends, and was even able to perform the staggering, baffling feat of "taking the figures out of the books" as easily as he himself could eat his dinner.

She came forward now with a quick, light step and with a paper in her hands, and as she laid it on Miss Mottram's table Reggie was able to see two neat parallel rows of figures and the most beautiful red-ink ruling.

"I say—how awfully jolly!" he murmured, and Miss Mottram looked puzzled and frowned at a remark she did not understand but decided to ignore.

"This shows our position to-day," she said, picking the paper up.

Miss Selwyn had remained standing by the writing-table in case she was wanted. Now she was in the act of turning away to go back to her own seat when Reggie, unable to control any longer his honest admiration, burst out with,

"Oh, I say—did you do that all by yourself?"

Miss Selwyn gave him a surprised glance from eyes of whose strange depth and sadness he now became aware for the first time. She did not speak, and Miss Mottram interrupted impatiently:

"Miss Selwyn is a competent bookkeeper. That is why I employ her. These figures—

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they are confidential, of course, but in the circumstances I think I am justified in letting you glance at them."

She rose and handed him the paper, and he knew very well that his manner as he rose, too, and took it, his glance, even the way in which he held the thing betrayed the fact that to him it conveyed no more meaning than a lot of Egyptian hieroglyphics would have done.

"You can see for yourself," Miss Mottram went on. "A firm like this, showing such results, is not likely to be very keen on taking over a concern in the position of yours. You lose ground every day. Take the Scottish contract—we have it. Take the Jackson connection—we are getting it." She selected another paper from one of the orderly piles before her. "That came from them to-day," she said. "A big order. Frankly, I don't think you will get much more from them in the future. We believe we are handling their business to better advantage than any one else can do or than Halstan's ever did. And the Singapore Planters'—well, I want to be frank with you, Mr. Halstan. Anyhow, you would know it soon enough. We are preparing to offer for that also."

"Are you, though?" said Reggie, trying to laugh and not succeeding very well. "Why—by Jove!—you won't leave us even a bare bone soon."

Miss Mottram condescended to smile, though it was not a smile that seemed much to deserve that pleasant and friendly name.

"That is why," she said, recovering quickly from such unwonted relaxation and looking as grim and harsh as ever, "we must withdraw our offer of ten thousand. But if you care to accept five thousand, Miss Selwyn will make you out a check on the spot."

IN HIS depressed and melancholy mood Reggie felt strongly tempted. Five thousand was little enough, but for the wreck of business left him, perhaps it was as much as he could expect. And five thousand pounds is not a great fortune, but it is a capital more than most possess, and with it one could make a good start in one of the colonies. And it would be worth something to break loose from this atmosphere of failure and suspicion by which he felt himself surrounded, to get clear away from all these mysteries of business he so little understood, away to a fresher, cleaner life, where at least he would be a man among men, not a pigeon among hawks, a lamb helpless in the hands of the shearers. And this hesitation that his features showed clearly enough, Miss Mottram felt she understood.

"Miss Selwyn"—her voice rang out harshly—"make out a check to Mr. Halstan's order for five thousand pounds."

She took his consent for granted, then.

Nor, for his part, did he feel much inclined to contradict her.

Suddenly he was aware that Miss Selwyn was looking at him, and in her great mournful eyes he seemed to read—was it a touch of contempt that showed glimmering there?

"Miss Selwyn, did you hear me?" Miss Mottram snapped out.

The girl started violently and began to unlock a drawer of the table at which she sat. But, though her eyes were averted now, Reggie still seemed to feel them resting on him with their look of questioning doubt and wonder, and he came to a sudden, swift determination. After all, to sell out like this, was it not a little like abandoning a position the moment the enemy began to bombard it? If the army had held on to the front with no greater tenacity than he was showing, would the war ever have been won?

"We won't trouble Miss Selwyn just now," he said, and even at the moment was aware of an odd satisfaction in pronouncing her name. "I must think it over—take advice."

Miss Mottram's face, which had clouded over at his sudden revolt, cleared again. She had no doubt but that those two last words meant Reggie intended to consult Mr. Thewn—probably his character was so weak he did not dare decide without consulting his manager—and she knew very well what advice Mr. Thewn would give.

"Right!" she snapped out in her abrupt, aggressive voice. "I will keep our offer open till the end of the month. That is sixteen days. But if you haven't accepted by then, don't blame me if we refuse to give five thousand pence. Good-by, Mr. Halstan."

She struck the bell on her table for a clerk to show Reggie out, and became instantly absorbed in the papers before her, as though the very memory of his existence

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"These figures—they are confidential, of course, but in the circumstances I think I am justified in letting you glance at them."

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had already passed entirely from her mind. But as Reggie walked slowly away it occurred to him that two things were a little strange, each in their own way; first, that Miss Mottram had used that expression which Mr. Thewn had also employed the previous day—about the concern being soon not worth five thousand pence, and, secondly, that Miss Selwyn, who had not spoken one word during the whole interview, had nevertheless been the dominating factor in it.

"But for her, I should have accepted," he said to himself.

MISS ANNE SELWYN, confidential clerk to Miss Mottram, of Mottram, Limited, was, in fact, as her employer had remarked, a highly competent accountant. Figures were to her friendly and familiar things, always ready to do just what she wanted. But, all the same, even she, with all her skill, was finding it difficult to devise a method whereby a weekly salary of three pounds five would fit into weekly bills amounting to three pounds fifteen—the task on which she was employed on the evening of the day of the interview between Reggie and Miss Mottram.

For when one has an ailing mother who requires many small comforts, and when prices, apparently subject to the same law as balloons, perpetually rise, it is difficult to cut down expenses; and when one is in the employ of a Miss Mottram, it is even more difficult to secure any increase in salary.

"She would simply sack me on the spot if I asked for a penny more," mused Miss Selwyn sadly. "All the same, something has got to be done—it's a case of either spend less or earn more or bust."

Having said this, she wept a little, and while thus engaged she perceived, to her great astonishment, the figure of Mr. Reginald Halstan appear at their garden gate, open it, pass through, approach their front door and ring their bell, all this happening in the most ordinary manner, just as though it were real and not a specially absurd dream.

She was, indeed, so astounded that she stopped in the very middle of a sob, and even the tear trickling down one cheek paused likewise, and hung suspended, poised on the very summit of the roundness of her cheek's soft curve.

"Whatever is the man coming here for?" she said aloud in her bewildered surprise; and she still sat there, rigid in her amazement, as her mother came out of the kitchen and went down the passage to the front door.

With even increased bewilderment she heard Reggie's voice inquire if Miss Selwyn lived there and if she were in, and her mother reply, as they say in police courts and in Parliament, in the affirmative to both questions. And she still sat completely paralyzed as the door opened and her mother announced, in tones of mingled gratification, surprise, doubt, suspicion and warning:

"A young gentleman wants to see you, Anne. He says his name is Halstan and that he met you in the City this morning and that it's on business."

Business! But what business could the head of Halstan's have to discuss with a junior employee of Mottram's?

Hard on this announcement of Mrs. Selwyn's, Reggie himself appeared; and when she saw him, Anne shut her eyes tight, hoping that, when she opened them again, the absurd, impossible vision would have vanished. But when she did look, Reggie was still there, and, moreover, he had somehow edged himself quite inside the room and was in the act of speaking.

"Oh, I say," he began; "I know you must be awfully surprised and all that, and you must think it's the most awful cheek, too. But it isn't really at all—not a scrap, honor bright. I'm most awfully serious, and I thought you wouldn't mind if I had a chat with you—about business, and all that sort of thing, you know."

Anne was still feeling too hopelessly astonished and bewildered to be able to stir a finger or so much as utter a single word. All she could do was sit and gape, and she even forgot to wipe away the tear still trembling on that exact spot where the curve of her cheek was at its fullest, while Reggie worked his way to the center of the room like one establishing himself there for an hour or two at the least. Feebly Anne looked at him and wondered if it were not due to herself to order him out of the house on the spot; only, she did so want to know what on earth he had come for. So she compromised by looking still more feebly at her mother, who quite misunderstood her

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silent appeal, replied to it by another look full of all those emotions her voice had expressed before and many more, condensed them into one final nod of maternal triumph and, to Anne's horror, discreetly melted away, closing the door behind her with a firm yet kind significance there was no mistaking.

IT WAS at this precise moment, when Anne saw herself thus abandoned to her fate, that Reggie Halstan noticed the tear still quiescent on her cheek, as though it loved to be there—a sensible, right-minded tear, one perceives.

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed in tones of the most heartfelt dismay and sympathy. "Oh—I beg your pardon—I didn't know—I—" He stopped abruptly, blighted by such a glare as a tigress robbed of her young might have bestowed on him.

For at that moment Anne felt she simply detested the man. It was like his impudence to come there at all. It was still more like his impudence to notice her tear. And it was most of all like his impudence to presume to dare appear to offer her his sympathy—as if she wanted his sympathy!

The worst of it was that she could not wipe away the tear without seeming to admit its presence—a thing she was steadfastly minded not to do. And it is difficult to look sufficiently cold and dignified to keep a pushing young man in his place when one is acutely aware of a tear still poised upon one's cheek. So she adopted the very poor and cheap expedient of knocking a book off the table with her elbow so that, while stooping to pick it up, she might give herself a furtive dab with her handkerchief.

But in carrying out this scheme she forgot to reckon with Reggie, who sprang with such alacrity to retrieve her book that a collision between their two heads was only averted by inches. Now, it is difficult to remain very haughty and aloof with a person against whose head you have just as nearly as possible banged your own. Besides, Reggie had a pleasant laugh, and Anne herself could not help smiling a little at their escape as she accepted the book he had picked up for her with such agility.

"Oh, thank you so much," she said.

It was the first time he had heard her voice, and this amazed him when he thought of it, for he had the impression that they had known each other for years. And he perceived that his instinct had been right when it told him that the sound of her voice would be more sweet and pleasant than any one he had ever heard before.

"I say; nearly a collision—what?" he exclaimed cheerfully—too cheerfully, Anne thought, and her tone had grown severe again as she said,

"May I ask why you are here?"

"I suppose it is a bit of a surprise," agreed Reggie thoughtfully.

"Not at all," said Anne in her most icy tones.

"Oh, I say; did you expect me?" he cried.

"How—how dare you?" demanded Anne, choking with fury as she sprang to her feet in indignation.

"I say; what's the matter?" he expostulated. "Have I said something I shouldn't? If you weren't surprised——"

"I was—of course I was!"

"Well, you said——"

"No, I didn't; I never did—at least, I mean—I didn't mean—I did—didn't—Mr. Halstan, will you be so kind as to explain as quickly as you can what you want and why you have come here?"

"Well, I'm trying to, ain't I?" he asked reproachfully. "Only, you do jump on a chap so, both feet together. You see—well—it's that beast of a balance-sheet."

"Balance-sheet?" she repeated, still more bewildered, and beginning to be inclined to suspect Reggie's sanity.

"Yes; rotten things, aren't they? At least, I suppose you don't mind 'em, but I would almost rather face a Jack Johnson or two—my word! I know you think I'm an awful fool." And he beamed on her cheerfully, as though he felt he had made it all absolutely clear.

"I don't understand," she said. "What have balance-sheets got to do with your coming here?"

"Ah, there you are, you see," he answered, still beaming.

"But I don't see at all."

"Well, I know it must seem rotten silly to you, but I can't get the hang of them at all. Honest, I can't. They are so much bally Hebrew to me. You see, we never had balance-sheets in the army, at least not in my battalion. Very likely there was a branch at G. H. Q. to deal with them. I don't know. But give me a balance-sheet

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and you give me a knock-out. And before I had been demobed a week, old Thewn comes along and claps the bally thing down —how was I to know the rotten idea was to have both sides the same?"

"But I still don't quite understand," she protested.

"Well then," he went on, "after old Thewn had bowled me out like that, middle stump, first ball, there you went handing another of the things to Miss Mottram just like handing a pal a drink. Awfully jolly it looked, too, with all that ripping red ruling and all that. So I thought if you could turn them out like that, perhaps you could show me how to do the trick myself. You see the idea?" he asked anxiously.

"Do you mean," she asked incredulously, "that you want me to teach you how to draw up a balance-sheet?"

"That's the ticket!" he exclaimed delightedly. "You will, won't you?"

"But why ever do you come to me?"

"Because," he answered simply, "I didn't know any one else."

"But you are the head of Halstan's—in your own office—Mr. Thewn, for instance?"

"I have reasons," he replied, "for not saying anything to Mr. Thewn."

He looked full at her as he spoke, and for the first time she seemed to catch a glimpse of his real personality.

"How did you know where I lived?" she asked.

"Ah!" he said, and looked as if, were he encouraged, he would wink. "Half a crown."

"Why—how?" she asked.

"The office-boy," he explained.

"Mr. Halstan," she cried indignantly, "do you mean to say you bribed the office-boy to tell you my address?"

"Not bribed," he protested. "It was half a crown, but it wasn't a bribe."

"Pray, what was it, then?" she demanded in her loftiest tone.

"Gratitude," he answered promptly.

"I am surprised—" she began in the same lofty tone, but he interrupted her.

"It's all right," he said. "The kid's a little sportsman, and promised not to tell."

"Really, Mr. Halstan," Anne protested, exceedingly angry that she did not feel as angry as she knew she ought, "it is most extraordinary—I don't know what to say."

"I know," he said sympathetically. "Like me when I'm up against a balance-sheet. Now, look here; there's this one. Old Thewn gave it to me this morning. It shows the position of the firm at—er—a glance."

"Yes," she said, taking it and looking at it.

"Well, does it?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"Then I wish to goodness you would show me how."

"It's perfectly simple."

"Oh, is it? Perhaps I should find it simple if I had your brains."

"It isn't a question of brains at all; it's merely knowing a little about bookkeeping."

"Well then, will you teach me a little about bookkeeping?"

"But I'm not a teacher——"

"Be one," he urged. "I'm in a regular fix. If you give me the go-by, I'm done. I know you think I'm a fool, but it's not that. —at least, it's not all that. I come home and I get demobed and I go to the office to take hold, as they say. But I don't know a thing about it, and I don't know what to take hold of or how to keep hold if I get hold. I don't know what you do in business or how or why. They didn't teach us business in the army; they only taught us how to kill Germans. Well, I learned that, and it's over now—thank the Lord!—unless the politicians manage to start us off again. So now I want to learn business."

"But——"

"And I want you to teach me."

"What——"

"Balance-sheets first; other things later. Of course, we must be businesslike and arrange terms. Shall we say a guinea a lesson?"

ANNE gasped, and a vision flashed before her of all weekly bills easily settled with something left over for small luxuries.

"But that's an absurd fee—" she began, and he interrupted her at once.

"Two guineas," he said.

"Mr. Halstan, you'll never make a business man," she told him severely. "Half a crown would be more like it."

"Now you're rotting me," he protested. "Well, look here; you shall name your own terms. That's all right, isn't it? Very well; now we'll start. Take this balance-sheet? Is it square?"

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"Square?"

"Yes; because I've rather thought once or twice that Miss Mottram and old Thewn were trying to squeeze me out."

"Oh, surely Miss Mottram would never try to do that!" exclaimed Anne, rather horrified at the idea. She paused and added hesitatingly, "Of course, it seems ridiculous to offer five thousand pounds for Halstan's."

"I should have taken it if you hadn't looked at me just then," he said softly.

"I didn't!" she declared, with some heat. "Certainly not! I never would. I only thought you were giving in a little easily."

"I know you did. That's why I made up my mind I wouldn't," he answered, and she decided it would be better to change the subject and talk of balance-sheets.

"This makes a very bad showing," she said, picking up the one he had given her. "On the face of it, that is. But you ought to verify the items. And you ought to see the profit-and-loss account as well."

"What's that?"

"Good-will is omitted—that's all right from one point of view. I prefer a balance-sheet without that item. But there's no need to forget it altogether. Are not your premises freehold?"

"Yes."

"That ought to be shown, anyhow. You must go through the books."

"So I will the moment you have told me what books and how."

"We should have to start from the very beginning of everything," she warned him.

"Just what I should like," he answered, with enthusiasm.

"I mean, of course," she explained sternly, "the beginning of everything in bookkeeping."

"Yes; I know," said Reggie, slightly discouraged.

"Then please listen carefully. There are two kinds of bookkeeping—single entry and double entry. Double entry depends on the obvious fact that every transaction has two sides—every sale means a purchase; every creditor means— It's only necessary to listen, Mr. Halstan; you needn't *stare* as well."

"But I can listen so much better if I can watch you at the same time," he urged humbly.

"I can talk better if you don't," she retorted. "Besides, you ought to take notes."

"So I will!" he declared, producing notebook and pen. "Now, if you will kindly begin again."

"Double entry—" she said, and for the next hour they worked really hard, Anne finding, a little to her surprise, that her pupil was intensely serious about it all, and that he displayed great quickness in following her teaching.

THREE weeks later, in the same room, at about the same hour of the evening, Anne sat back in her chair and looked thoughtfully at Reggie, and then at a paper in her hand, on which were neat columns of figures neatly ruled in red ink, and then back again at him.

"Mr. Halstan," she said, "this is a very good, sound piece of work. No one could have drawn up a clearer balance-sheet."

Reggie looked tired and a little worn. His hair was not tidy and his collar was crumpled, and beneath his eyes black lines were visible. When Anne spoke, he laid down his pen and looked up.

"Do you think that I can now call myself a competent bookkeeper?" he said slowly.

"I should never have believed it possible," she exclaimed, with a note of real admiration in her voice, "that any one could have done it in such a short time!"

"You see, I knew I had to," he explained gravely. "When you are right up against a thing and you've simply got to—well then, very often you find you can. The army rather taught that to a chap."

"You have worked dreadfully hard," she said meditatively.

"Twenty hours a day, seven days a week," he agreed. "Since you began to teach me, I have never once spent more than three hours in bed." He paused and yawned. "When it's over," he remarked, "I shall sleep a week without stopping."

"It's a wonder you haven't made yourself ill," declared Anne severely.

"Oh, one can stand a lot for a limited time," he answered. "Besides, I've done it before. In March, 1918, I never slept at all for six days on end. Will you look at these?" he added, passing a handful of papers across the table to her.

But she shook her head and laid them down again without looking at them.

"There is no need," she said. "You

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know as much as I do now—more. You have a real faculty for figures—much more than I have."

Rising to her feet, she began with great deliberation to clear away the books and papers cumbering the table between them. When he had watched her for a little, he said,

"What is that for?"

"I have taught you all I can," she answered. "Our lessons are over."

"Does that mean," he asked, "that I am to clear out?"

"There is nothing else for you to come here for, is there?" she returned. "I have taught you everything I know."

"Are you sure of that?" he asked.

"Everything," she repeated firmly. "About bookkeeping," she added.

"But there are other subjects——"

"None that I am competent to teach," she answered. "And now, if you will take my advice, you will pack up your books and go home and go to bed."

"No," he said firmly. "If I did, I should stop there, and that wouldn't do. Not yet."

"Of course," she conceded, "you need actual experience, both in handling books and in office routine."

"I'll begin getting that first thing tomorrow," he declared, rising to his feet. "You think I shall be thoroughly equipped then?"

"Oh, thoroughly," she answered.

He began slowly to collect his books and papers and to pack them into a leather bag he had with him.

"I'm awfully obliged to you, Miss Selwyn," he said. "You have been more than patient. I'm sure no one else would have taken such pains or been at such trouble; no poor unlucky greenhorn could have hoped for a better teacher. I am afraid you must have found me a sad trial at times."

"Oh, no; not at all," she said politely. "It has been a pleasure."

"I wish I knew," he murmured, half to himself it seemed, "whether you meant that."

She did not answer, but continued to watch him in silence as he finished packing up his books. When he had completed that task, he turned to her again, holding out an envelope.

"I can never pay you," he said, "for all the care and trouble and attention you have given me. But if you will accept this as your fee, I shall be very glad."

She knew it was both foolish and unreasonable that this should hurt her so badly, and she knew it was absurd of her to wince and hesitate. With an effort she put out her hand and took the envelope.

"Thank you," she said formally. "Shall I write you a receipt?"

And it was a satisfaction to her to feel that now, in her turn, she had succeeded in hurting him.

"I don't think it's necessary," he answered, flushing a little, and then he held out his hand. "Well, good-by," he said. "And thank you again."

"Good-by," she said, taking the hand he offered and dropping it again. "When you are a well-known, successful, wealthy business man, and chairman and director of ever so many companies, I shall always be proud to think I gave you your first business lessons."

WITHOUT answering, he bowed and went out of the room. She heard his firm, familiar tread in the passage. She heard the front door close. She heard his step die away in the distance, and she became exceedingly busy, moving about the room and tidying it and putting things straight. But gradually her activities slackened; she came to a standstill. Slowly she let herself sink on the nearest chair, and gradually a tear or two stole out and furtively, as if more than half ashamed of being there at all, began to creep down her cheeks. Their timidity was justified, for the moment she was aware of them she dashed them away with an impatient gesture, and then all at once she began to giggle as she remembered that when Reggie Halstan first appeared he had found her in tears, just as now she discovered herself weeping at the moment of his departure. But she did not remember that between his coming and his going she had ever wept at all.

"Anne Selwyn," she said aloud to herself, with extreme severity, "you are a perfect little fool and you ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself—stop it; do you hear?"

This command she uttered with such decision, such ferocity, indeed, that no one but herself could possibly have ventured to

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"Well," answered Reggie, "if you will discuss your business with my manager in my office in a loud voice, you mustn't wonder if you are overheard."

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disobey. But disobey she did; for first one more tear appeared, and then another and another, and it seemed a whole downpour threatened when the door opened and Mrs. Selwyn put her head cautiously in.

"Has Mr. Halstan gone?" she asked. "He is off early to-night."

"We've finished," Anne explained. "He is not coming back; the lessons are done."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Selwyn, and she looked very disappointed indeed. "But surely he will come back after the trouble you've taken and all?"

"No," said Anne firmly. "He won't. Never!"

Mrs. Selwyn looked still more disappointed.

"Has he paid you?" she asked presently in a tone that indicated that in this world one must put up with the best one can get.

Anne indicated the envelope on the table.

"He gave me that before he went," she said.

Mrs. Selwyn picked it up.

"It's not coins," she said, with satisfaction. She bent it between her fingers. "And I don't think it's notes," she decided. "Anne, it must be a check!"

"Open it if you like and see," said Anne indifferently.

Mrs. Selwyn needed no second invitation. Visions of ten, of twenty pounds or more crossed her mind. She tore open the envelope and drew out a sheet of ordinary note-paper, across which was written the name: "Reggie Halstan"—that, and nothing more.

"Goodness me!" said Mrs. Selwyn, looking at it with great doubt and suspicion. "Whatever's this?"

"What is it?" asked Anne.

"It's a do," said Mrs. Selwyn firmly: "that's what it is! He's done you, Anne; he has!"

"May I look?" said Anne, and she took the paper.

That was all it was—a sheet of paper with his name written across it and nothing more. She stood looking at it with a very bewildered air, and in tones trembling with disappointment and vexation Mrs. Selwyn burst out,

"I never did trust that young man—never!"

"Mother!" protested Anne.

"And the hours and hours you've worked with him!" cried Mrs. Selwyn. "And then to go off like this and cheat you of your due! Anne, you must put him in the County Court for it."

"Oh, please don't say such things!" cried Anne. "Please don't!"

"But you must!" insisted Mrs. Selwyn. "Haven't you a right to your hard-earned money? What next, I wonder? How much did you arrange for?"

"I think the arrangement was," confessed Anne, "that he could pay whatever he thought the lessons worth."

"Anne!" cried Mrs. Selwyn in despair. "Why, then, you can't do anything at all! And you call yourself a business girl! And you were to teach him business! Little," said Mrs. Selwyn grimly, "did he need it."

"Don't worry, mother," said Anne soothingly. "I'm not out of pocket, and the lessons have been quite good f-f-fun."

"Fun!" repeated Mrs. Selwyn, and, not daring to trust herself to express all she felt, she withdrew, letting the paper with Reggie's name on it flutter unheeded to the ground.

When the door had closed behind her and Anne was alone again, she looked at this paper and hesitated, and then slowly picked it up. What did it mean? Why had he played on her what had the appearance of being a specially cruel trick, for he well knew that she had need of the money? Was it simply a mistake, a piece of casual carelessness? Had he meant to enclose a check in the envelope and had this piece of paper got in by some error? Oh, what did it mean?

"Oh, well," she said at last; "that's all over and done with." And with some care she folded up this piece of paper that was to be, it seemed, her fee for all the work she had done, and put it very carefully away.

MR. THEWN was quite astonished and possibly not too well pleased when, the next morning, Reggie reached the office before the hour of eleven. For that was early for Reggie, and the later he appeared the better Mr. Thewn like it. Indeed, had Reggie never come near the office at all, Mr. Thewn would have made no complaint. But the manager's face cleared when he noticed how pale and wan Reggie looked, and how the great dark rings beneath his

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eyes seemed to-day more marked, even, than before.

"Morning, Mr. Halstan," he said genially.

"Morning. You look tired."

"Got a beastly head," Reggie confessed—quite truly—for he was beginning to approach the limits of his endurance, and this morning his head ached badly as a result of his recent nights spent in tedious study instead of sleep. "I shall have to go out and get a pick-me-up," he added, for he knew he would have need of clear brains before that day was over.

"I hope you weren't making a night of it?" said Mr. Thewn, laughing.

"Got to bed," confessed Reggie ruefully, "at half-past four."

Mr. Thewn laughed again. He knew life, he would have told you; he knew young men, too.

"Ah, well, Mr. Halstan," he said tolerantly, "I'm glad you have a little pleasure at night, for I fear I have not too good news for you. I had a message over the 'phone yesterday afternoon after you had gone out to lunch—I was hoping you would look in again. It was from Sir John Jackson himself. He is coming in to-day, he says. He says that, in view of the long connection between his firm and Halstan's, he does not want to make any change too abruptly, and so he wants a chat with us this morning. So I think it would be as well for you to stay till he comes, so that you can hear yourself what he has to say."

"Well, if you really think I ought to be present," agreed Reggie meekly.

"It would be better," declared Mr. Thewn emphatically, for the presence of his principal—his nominal principal—would be a protection against any unkind rumors the future might see developing, and he had no fear that Reggie would understand the coming discussion with Sir John Jackson sufficiently well to be able to form any opinion on it. "Of course," he remarked, "we shall have to go into the figures rather closely. You need only agree with me when I appeal to you and say 'Yes' or 'No' as the case may be."

"I see," said Reggie. "I shall only have to be careful not to say 'Yes' when it ought to be 'No,' and 'No' when it ought to be 'Yes,' eh—what?"

Then they both laughed heartily at Reggie's little joke, and Reggie asked,

"What do you think the old thing is coming round himself for?"

Mr. Thewn shook his head dolefully.

"I have had the feeling for a long time that the Jackson connection was slipping from us." He sighed.

"Mottram's, I suppose?" remarked Reggie.

"Oh, Mottram's undoubtedly," agreed Mr. Thewn. "Well, we must hope for the best."

BUT Mr. Thewn made this remark with an air that said plainly that also they must expect the worst. He added that Jackson's had a new manager—a Scot—very keen, a demon for figures, hard as nails. It was most likely he who had suggested to Sir John that Mottram's would suit them better than Halstan's.

"A perfect demon for figures, they say, this new manager," repeated Mr. Thewn admiringly.

"Sort of chap who knows all about balance-sheets?" said Reggie, and he and Mr. Thewn laughed again together.

"But that's not the worst," continued Mr. Thewn, recovering his gravity, "there's a letter from Singapore Planters' saying they consider that expenses are high and asking if development should not be possible now on the Continent, especially in Belgium, and they want us to submit a scheme. They hint that a scheme has been submitted from another quarter by which they have been much impressed, and they want us to give them our views. Here is their letter."

"I suppose that means," observed Reggie, "that some one is after them to cut us out—Mottram's?"

"Oh, Mottram's beyond a doubt," declared Mr. Thewn.

"Why are Mottram's like roses?" asked Reggie dreamily. "Because it's 'Mottram's, Mottram's all the way.' Well, I suppose we can't complain. She gave me full warning that day I went to see them. I told you, didn't I?"

"Yes; but I never dreamed they would act so soon," answered Mr. Thewn. "I shouldn't have thought they were ready."

"Is it Mottram's who have the Malay States Producers' business?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Thewn, faintly surprised that Reggie had ever heard of the Malay States Producers' Syndicate.

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"I suppose," suggested Reggie timidly, "it wouldn't be any good our trying to retaliate there—sort of hitting back, you know—trying to cut Mottram's out there, just as they are trying to cut us out everywhere else?"

Mr. Thewn roared with laughter at the idea. He thought it too funny for words.

"I am afraid," he said, "we have our hands too full trying to keep our own connection to attempt to raid other people's. And I only wish we had half the grip on our business Mottram's have on all theirs—on the Malay States Producers' in especial. Why, even your father never dreamed of trying for them."

"It was just an idea," said Reggie humbly. "You see, in the army, when we could hardly hang on to our own lines by the skin of our teeth, then was the time when we used to raid the Germans for all we were worth."

"Army methods are hardly applicable to business," said Mr. Thewn. "You must forget the army now you're in the City, Mr. Halstan. You won't forget about Sir John Jackson's visit?"

"I'll be on hand when you want me," Reggie promised.

"You see," said Mr. Thewn, "if we go on losing connections like this, there is only one possible end—bankruptcy."

"Oh, bankruptcy, eh?" repeated Reggie, and, looking for once thoroughly disturbed, he went out of the room, muttering to himself, "Bankruptcy, eh—what?"

"I managed to wake the young slacker up a bit that time," Mr. Thewn thought, with some satisfaction, and turned again to his work, with which, however, he was not destined to make much progress, for before long one of the clerks announced that Miss Mottram was in the outer office.

MR. THEWN was not pleased, and his manner to his visitor when she was shown in was somewhat disturbed.

"I didn't expect you," he said, closing the office door with some care. "I thought we agreed it would be more prudent—we don't want to give any opportunity for stupid gossip, do we?"

"Oh, stop cackling like that!" snapped Miss Mottram. "This is serious. That's why I'm here. Not for pleasure, you know. Besides, there's a perfectly good reason. I've never had any reply to my offer. Quite natural I should call to see what you are doing about it, isn't it? But never mind that. Have you heard from the Jackson people?"

"Sir John himself is calling this morning; he may be here any minute," answered Mr. Thewn. "That's all right. He evidently means to give us a last chance, and the young slacker here is too big a fool even to see it."

"If you think that's what it means, all right," said Miss Mottram, looking relieved. "He has written to say he is coming round to see us as well."

"No doubt," said Mr. Thewn easily. "Quite natural. Having broken with us definitively, he will want to offer you the sole agency. Really, Miss Mottram, I wish you hadn't come round here, especially for such a trivial reason. One can't be too careful."

"Perhaps I am a bit too jumpy," confessed Miss Mottram. "I sha'n't feel all right till this deal has gone through. When Halstan's is in my pocket, I shall feel different. Till then I shall be raggy. I wish we hadn't tried to cut the figure. I believe young Halstan would have taken the ten thousand, and the Lord knows it's worth that ten times over."

"You can get it for half the five soon," declared Thewn, "though I dare say he will take more if you wish to offer it. This Jackson affair will go near finishing us. If he tries to hold out, let him go into bankruptcy. I shall be trustee, and I shall earn the gratitude of the creditors if I get as much as five thousand out of you for the wreckage. Then, once you have control, we can go ahead; we shall have something like a monopoly for the time."

"We shall be able to cut expenses," Miss Mottram agreed. "We shall be able to sack half your staff and some of mine. I made a start this morning. A fool of a girl asked me for a rise. I gave her five minutes to collect her week's salary in lieu of notice and walk out of the office. That was Anne Selwyn."

"Oh, we shall have a little gold mine," declared Mr. Thewn.

"A bit rough on young Halstan—eh?" suggested Miss Mottram.

"It's the young rotter's own fault," declared Mr. Thewn vehemently. "Serves

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him right. If he had chosen to take me into partnership, I could have kept the firm afloat well enough. But he wouldn't, so he must take the consequences. Besides, he will be all right. With your five thousand, if you chose to pay as much, he will do well in the colonies somewhere. Of course, if you are weakening——"

Miss Mottram chuckled grimly.

"Not me," she said. "But I am a bit jumpy. Another thing: I've had rather an odd letter from Malay States Producers'—they say they think expenses seem a little high, and they suggest that development should be possible now on the Continent—Belgium, especially. Want us to submit a scheme. Hint they have one from another source."

"Why, that's almost exactly what Singapore Planters' have written to us!" exclaimed Mr. Thewn, much startled. "Don't you think you were a little premature in approaching them? I thought we had agreed a delay there would do no harm. Here's their letter."

Miss Mottram took it and looked very bewildered and worried.

"I don't understand," she said. "It's not us—we made no such suggestion to them. Who can it be?"

"Not you?" repeated Mr. Thewn incredulously. "But it must be! There's no one but Mottram's and Halstan's with the experience or the facilities for handling the business. It's not us—that's certain. So it must be you."

"Don't talk like a fool!" retorted Miss Mottram. "Is it likely we should make competitive proposals against Halstan's when I mean to have control of Halstan's myself in a few weeks?"

"But there's no one else," persisted Thewn, "except Halstan's and Mottram's."

"Looks like there is," snapped Miss Mottram, "unless they're bluffing—and that might account for this letter you've had from Singapore Planters' being so like the one I've got from Malay Producers'."

Thewn brought his clenched fist down on the table before him with all his force.

"That's it!" he cried excitedly. "We ought to have seen that at once. It's a bluff. They've put their heads together—old Syd Mears, very likely; he's on the board of both concerns. It's a bluff to try to squeeze us. That's the game!"

"If I thought that," said Miss Mottram slowly, "I'd call the bluff. If they are trying to squeeze us, I won't stand that. I'll call their hand. Why, as soon as I get control of Halstan's, I mean to increase all charges fifty per cent."

"So we will!" cried Thewn. "Or more! They're trying to run a bluff. Very well. Bluff back; we hold all the cards."

"I will," said Miss Mottram and walked over to the 'phone. "May I use it?" she said, and gave the number without waiting for a reply.

When connection was made, she lost no time in beating about the bush.

"You are Malay Producers'?" she asked. "This is Mottram's talking. About your letter. We have considered it. We have no other scheme to suggest. We don't think one necessary. If you don't like the way we handle your business, we are quite willing to withdraw. If you wish it, we cancel all contracts and arrangements here and now if you think you can find any other firm to act on lower terms and show as good results."

"That's the stuff to give them!" chuckled Mr. Thewn delightedly. "You see, we've got them where the hair is short. They know as well as you no other firm in the country can take on the business without at least twelve months' preparation."

"Certainly I mean it." Miss Mottram was speaking into the telephone again. "Our considered decision. . . . By all means. I will confirm it by letter at once. Mr. Thewn, pen and paper, please!"

SHE turned away from the telephone as she spoke, and, to her extreme astonishment, saw Reggie himself standing, smiling inanely, in the doorway.

"Oh, beg pardon," he said. "So sorry. Didn't know you were here. Come to talk things over with Thewn, Miss Mottram?"

"Yes," she answered quietly enough, though in reality more than a little shaken by his sudden appearance; "or, rather, with you. I must know what you mean to do about that offer of mine. You see, young gentleman, a firm like ours can't keep five thousand locked up for weeks at a stretch. We must know one way or the other."

Reggie looked all round with a very worried air.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "Tell you

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what—I'll let you know to-day. I was just going to slip out for a little drink—got an awful head this morning. But you shall know for sure some time to-day."

He nodded again and withdrew, and Mr. Thewn smiled.

"That means," he said, "he will accept."

"Good!" said Miss Mottram, and drew a long breath and then looked faintly anxious again. "You don't think," she said, "he heard anything?"

"What would it matter?" asked Mr. Thewn contemptuously. "The young fool wouldn't understand a word."

Miss Mottram sat down and wrote her note to the Malay Producers' and had it sent off by a boy messenger, and hardly had it gone when one of the clerks appeared with word that Sir John Jackson had arrived.

"He's before his time," Thewn said, and looked at Miss Mottram a little uneasily.

"Oh, that's all right," Miss Mottram said carelessly. "Let's see him together. Why not? I'll let him know I am negotiating to take you over, and if he has any idea of trying to cut terms, he may as well know what he'll be up against."

SIR JOHN JACKSON was a tall, portly man with a very red face and side-whiskers in the Victorian style that gave him an odd resemblance to the traditional stage butler. At the moment of his entry into Mr. Thewn's room he wore a somewhat troubled and worried look, for he was genuinely sorry to feel, as he did, that Halstan's was going down-hill. He had known Reggie's father well and by no means wished to sever the connection with his firm, but at the same time he did not see how in justice to his own shareholders he could do otherwise.

His look of worry and concern changed to one of considerable surprise as he saw that Miss Mottram was present, since she was about the last person he would have expected to see comfortably established in the private office of her chief-competitor's manager. Nor was she a lady for whom he had any great liking, though he had a deep respect for her business abilities.

"I was coming round to see you later, Miss Mottram," he remarked, as they shook hands. "I didn't expect to meet you here. Is Mr. Halstan in?"

"I'm afraid not," answered Mr. Thewn, with apparent reluctance. "I reminded him you would be here soon, but I think he felt the need of a little liquid refreshment—army ways, you know, Sir John."

"I see," said Sir John, and looked vexed and disappointed, and Miss Mottram said:

"I had better explain, Sir John. I have made an offer to purchase Halstan's. I looked in this morning to try to settle details Of course, you understand this is confidential."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Sir John, much startled. "Is young Halstan thinking of giving up, then?"

"Oh, I dare say life in one of the colonies will suit him better than the City does," declared Mr. Thewn.

"I shall endeavor," observed Miss Mottram, "to carry on Halstan's on the same lines. Increase efficiency, too. That will make up for the increased charges we shall have to make."

"Ah, yes," said Sir John warily, feeling that here was a challenge thrown down. "Yes; that's a point I wanted to discuss. The fact is, a scheme has been laid before us. It impressed MacLean a good deal. He showed it me, and it impressed me, too. It provides for a considerable decrease in expenses and a very marked development of business. Unless you can put something of the same sort before me, I shall have to consider this new scheme seriously, very seriously—in fairness to my shareholders I could do no less."

Miss Mottram and Mr. Thewn looked at each other, and Mr. Thewn's lips formed the word "bluff." Miss Mottram saw and nodded almost imperceptibly to show she thought the same, and then turned to Sir John.

"Indeed!" she said. "Frankly, I'm surprised to hear any one but Halstan's or Mottram's is in a condition to handle your business. May I ask who it is has submitted this wonderful new scheme?"

"That I can't tell you," Sir John answered, "because I don't know."

Miss Mottram permitted herself to laugh outright. Mr. Thewn, more prudent, contented himself with smiling at the ceiling. Flushing slightly, Sir John went on:

"Naturally, I shall require adequate guarantees for carrying the thing through, but it did not impress me as put forward by

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any irresponsible person. Quite the contrary. But before going further into the matter, I wished to see both your firms—both Halstan's and Mottram's—as we have had dealings with both. I wished you to have full warning before we took any steps in the matter."

"Oh, very good of you," declared Miss Mottram. "But please don't consider us at all. Frankly, our position is that no firm except my own and Halstan's could begin to handle your business without at least a year's preparation—or longer. And, frankly, we can't handle it any longer on past terms. I have drawn up a memorandum on the point. I will send it round to you to-day. It will provide for considerable increases. If you can find another firm to handle your connections at a lower figure, you must do so, of course. Frankly, I don't believe such a firm exists. To submit a scheme is one thing. To be prepared to carry it out in actual practise is another. Sir John, we have the selling organization and—no one else has. Don't forget it."

SIR JOHN hesitated. He knew there was much truth in what Miss Mottram said. There existed, so far as he knew, no other firm with the organization ready to carry on the business. And if the scheme that had so much impressed his manager and himself turned out not to be backed with adequate experience or resources, he might find himself in a very awkward position if he had broken with Mottram's and with Halstan's. Miss Mottram saw the impression she had made.

"I must go now," she said. "I dare say you and Mr. Thewn have business to talk over together, and my purchase of Halstan's is not formally complete yet. I'll send you that memo, Sir John. You will be able to let me have an answer this week, I hope?"

"Oh, certainly," said Sir John, beginning to feel he had been rather foolish in allowing a communication from an unknown source to impress him so much. "Oh, quite so." And, as he spoke, the door opened and Reggie came smiling in.

"They told me you were here, Sir John," he said cheerfully. "Miss Mottram, too! How do, Miss Mottram? Regular conference—isn't it?—like those peace johnnies, eh—what?"

"I came in to ask for a prompt reply to my offer," explained Miss Mottram. "I must know now, one way or the other. Sir John is thinking of handing over his firm's business to another quarter. Frankly, that'll mean a heavy loss to both you and me, young gentleman. But of course I stand by my offer. Can't very well draw back now I've made it. But you must let me know."

"I hear you are thinking of selling to Miss Mottram?" observed Sir John.

"Not at all," answered Reggie amiably. "Miss Mottram is thinking of buying, but that's quite different."

"Well, I can't buy without your selling; can I, young gentleman?" demanded Miss Mottram.

Reggie was fed up with being called "young gentleman," and the glance he gave Miss Mottram was almost malign.

"No," he said; "you jolly well can't."

"Well then," said Miss Mottram, puzzled by some indefinite change she perceived in the young man—a new briskness in his voice, a new energy in his manner.

"Sir John," explained Thewn, "has had a new scheme laid before him from an outside source containing suggestions for handling his firm's affairs. He is thinking of adopting it, he tells us. He is kind enough to warn us, so to speak. If he does decide to sever his connection——"

"Oh, I've not at all decided," interposed Sir John, with some haste. "I merely thought it would be fair to mention it to you. Naturally, acceptance will have to depend on guarantees for the successful carrying-out of the suggestions——"

"You will find those quite satisfactory," interposed Reggie smilingly.

All three turned to stare at him in blank amazement.

"What do you know about it, young gentleman?" snapped Miss Mottram.

"Sir John is speaking," explained Mr. Thewn, as you might explain elementary matters to a quite small child, "of the scheme for a different handling of his business I told you has been shown to him from another quarter and of the necessary guarantees for its being successfully carried out. I shall be surprised to learn that any firm except our own and Miss Mottram's can give such guarantees."

"Well, if we can, isn't that enough?" asked Reggie.

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"It would be," agreed Mr. Thewn, still more patiently, "if we had happened to submit the scheme in question. But as we did not——"

"That," interrupted Reggie, "is where you miss your guess. We did."

"Do you mean—" began Sir John, and paused with a puzzled and bewildered air.

Mr. Thewn began to laugh, and in the middle of his laughter stopped abruptly and looked very oddly across the table at Reggie. In her loudest and harshest voice, Miss Mottram said,

"Rubbish!"

"Not at all," answered Reggie mildly. "I drew up the scheme Sir John refers to and dropped in yesterday to show it to MacLean. I asked him to show it you, Sir John, but not to say at first who it came from. However, if we are to discuss business, I should like a shorthand writer present to take a note—my confidential clerk." He went to the door. "Miss Selwyn, will you please come in?"

ANNE entered promptly, note-book and pencil in hand and looking rather dazed, as if she did not quite understand the position in which she found herself. Reggie pulled forward a chair for her to seat herself at the table, and Miss Mottram burst out indignantly:

"She's not your clerk; she's mine! I sacked her this morning."

"Quite so," agreed Reggie. "And thereon I engaged her. I happened to meet Miss Selwyn as I was passing your place on my way to see the Malay States Producers' people."

"The Malay States Producers'!" almost shouted Miss Mottram. "What did you want there?"

"Well," answered Reggie, "if you will discuss your business with my manager in my office in a loud voice, you mustn't wonder if you are overheard. I was lucky enough to drop in on Malay Producers' just as they got your message, giving notice of canceling all your contracts with them. I had submitted them a scheme on much the same lines as the one I showed Sir John. They seem to have liked it all right, and as I turned up just when your message came to hand, they signed at once a new set of contracts with me."

"But—but—but—" stammered Miss Mottram, "you said you were going out for a drink."

"A cup of tea," explained Reggie blandly, "at the nearest tea-shop."

"But this—this is absurd!" cried Mr. Thewn. "How could you get to know enough about the business—to prepare schemes or anything else? Why, you told me yourself you were never in bed before half-past four or five in the morning!"

"No," agreed Reggie mildly. He turned to Sir John. "You see, I had a lot of leeway to make up when I was demobed," he explained. "I've been rather swotting. I had to start at the beginning. Miss Selwyn taught me a lot, starting at the elements of bookkeeping. Once I got the hang of the figures, the rest was pretty simple. As Thewn says, I was up till four or five every morning, working out new plans and studying the details of the business."

"I thought," groaned Mr. Thewn, "it was cards, dancing, suppers."

"No; it was hard work—jolly hard work," answered Reggie. "So, when I felt I had the hang of the thing, I thought I saw how the show could be reorganized. I sent in schemes accordingly to Sir John, to Malay Producers', to Singapore Planters'. I have the Malay Producers' contract signed. I signed with Singapore Planters' first thing this morning. I am hoping to sign with Sir John——"

"Sir John," interrupted Miss Mottram, her voice shrill and excited, "I'll reduce all our charges to you fifty per cent.!"

"Ah!" said Reggie, sighing. "That's an offer I can't rival. Only, it will mean Mottram's will be working at a dead loss—and business handled at a dead loss is not, as a rule, handled satisfactorily. It don't develop. But of course Sir John must decide if he thinks it good enough."

"I don't," said Sir John promptly. "Mr. Halstan, you seem to have shown much energy and ability. But what on earth made you think of selling out to Miss Mottram?"

"I never did," answered Reggie gently. "It was quite her own idea—all her own."

Miss Mottram's look at him was not pleasant. She had lost that morning fully a half of her firm's business, and she realized that unless she were careful the rest might well follow. Without a word or a look to any one she walked out of the office, and

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Thewn, ghastly pale and shaking in every limb, looked pitiably at Reggie.

"Thewn," Reggie said slowly, "you were a long time with my father, and I believe you felt you had a grievance. You shall stay on if you wish to. In his last letter to me, my father said you would do well as manager under my strict supervision. I hope he was right."

Overwhelmed by a relief almost too great to be borne, Mr. Thewn sank back in his chair, covering his face with his hands, and Reggie turned to Sir John.

"There may be some little details," he suggested, "you might care to discuss——"

WHEN, an hour or so later, after a long and detailed discussion of many matters, Sir John rose at last to go, he was in a very good temper.

"I shall look for great results," he purred, with visions of an increased dividend to declare to appreciative shareholders at the next general meeting. "I congratulate you Mr. Halstan. For so young a man you show a remarkable grip of essentials. Your father had an unusual gift for figures; you have evidently inherited it in an even more marked degree."

"Oh, I don't know—anyhow, I'm very glad you think so," said Reggie, blushing a little. "It's chiefly that I've been tackling the thing good and hard—had to, you know. If you stick to a thing, you're bound to master it in the end, gift or no gift. And then I was well grounded by a jolly good teacher. It's really Miss Selwyn taught me what I do know."

Sir John looked at Miss Selwyn, who had been very pale, and now began very slowly but none the less thoroughly to turn exceedingly red. Sir John chuckled.

"Well," he said, "I congratulate Miss Selwyn on her pupil—you on your teacher."

Then he chuckled again and went away, and Reggie remarked carelessly:

"Well, I suppose there had better be a memo drawn up of all this. Miss Selwyn, please come into my room. I shall want to look through your notes."

Into the privacy of Reggie's own room Miss Selwyn therefore followed him, and the moment the door was closed behind them she burst into tears.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Reggie in dismay.

Miss Selwyn positively howled.

"I haven't got a single note hardly—not any proper ones," she wailed. "I was too excited; I was all upset. It wasn't fair—oh, it wasn't; it wasn't!"

"What wasn't?" asked Reggie. "I——"

"I only told you Miss Mottram had sent me away," Anne answered reproachfully, "and you rushed me here and you rushed me there, and you never listened, and you never explained, and," she added in tones of still deeper reproach, "you gave me a pencil without any point."

"Did I, though?" exclaimed Reggie, conscience-stricken.

"Yes, you did!" she declared indignantly. "And I was all in a muddle and I didn't hardly know where I was or what had happened or whether I was standing on my head or my heels, and you tell me to take a shorthand note—I did get the last half down pretty well, but all the first half is just the most awful mix-up you ever saw—like I was myself."

"Is it, though?" said Reggie, much concerned.

"I suppose," said Anne dolefully, "you'll want to send me away now, like Miss Mottram."

Reggie got swiftly between her and the door. He thought it well to take no chances.

"You've never told me yet," he said gently, "whether you mean to accept the fee I offered you yesterday for teaching me bookkeeping."

"But you didn't offer me anything," answered Anne, a little puzzled and even resentful. "I thought you meant it wasn't worth anything. There was only your name——"

"My name," he interrupted; "yes. The man goes with the name, you know."

Anne cast a hurried glance toward the door. But Reggie, with his gift of foresight, stood between her and it.

"I—" she stammered.

He leaned forward and took her hand—a most unbusinesslike proceeding.

"My dear," he said.

And then he kissed her.

"You mustn't; you mustn't!" she cried though she could not truthfully have protested that she found the sensation disagreeable. "Oh, you mustn't! Why, I'm only a poor girl, and you're rich, you know."

"Now I've got you," he answered contentedly, drawing her nearer to him, "I certainly am."

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Before the girl had paid the driver, a white-haired woman appeared at the door. "Oh, my dear, dear little Kerry!" she called, her arms outheld.

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A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Lost Diana

A Timid Little Girl, Apparently from the Country, with a Pretty Face and an Air of Extraordinary Quiet, as Though She Had Never Moved Quickly or Noisily, and—New York

By Inez Haynes Irwin

Illustrations by R. K. Ryland

A YOUNG girl emerged timidly from the Grand Central Station, New York, one debonair morning in June, hesitated and stopped.

She looked round with eyes deeply shining under their thick lashes. A sense of holiday lifted her slender bosom with a sudden lithe leap of happiness.

Calling a taxi, she gave an address in the East Thirties. Apparently she was from the country. The plain, brown, ill-fitting suit which made such awkward havoc of her faint curves was provincial; the little brown-straw hat which covered the mass of her dusky hair was almost rustic. At first she sat primly in the middle of the taxi-seat, a brown traveling-bag clutched tightly in one modestly gloved hand, a toy typewriter clutched closely in the other.

After an interval, as though impelled against her own wish, she turned her face to the open window. It was certainly a charming face, so exquisitly carved and so delicately textured that the eye of the body was certain to note beauty in it before the eye of the mind saw established character, incipient personality. Somehow, though, the major impression was not of activity or of vividness but of a singular stillness, an extraordinary quiet, as though she had never moved quickly or noisily in her life.

The taxi stopped before a small house, its bricks painted pink and its windows trimmed with green blinds—a modest, pleasant little house, whose eyes, draped between long hanging draperies of stiff lace and by short sash-curtains of soft muslin, presented at first no stare of life. But the instant the taxi stopped a white flash appeared at an upper window. The face—that of an elderly woman—smiled. A hand waved; the face withdrew. Before the girl had paid the driver, the owner of the face, a white-haired woman with a pair of noticeable eyes, appeared at the door.

"Oh, my dear, dear little Kerry!" she called, her arms outheld as she ran down the steps.

Kerry submitted to Mrs. Lane's tender embrace; then, perceiving the tears which increased the limpidity of the big dark eyes, eked it out with a series of ecstatic hugs. She looked about the little hall, at the hook-studded hat-rack, the striped wall-paper, the fresh white paint, the unobtrusive carpet, the tiny, graceful stairway with its slender rail.

"Oh, what a darling of a little house, Aunt K! Wasn't it too bad you had to turn it into a boarding-house when it would make such a lovely home for us?"

The dining-room was the front basement room—so low that it would have been too dark if every effort had not been made to lighten it.

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"Oh, how sweet it is, Aunty K!" Kerry approved. "And everything is so fresh! You don't know how I like new things, light things, gay things!"

Aunty K. drew her niece to the corner nearest the kitchen.

"This is where you will sit now," she said. "I am going to put you beside Mr. Murray and opposite Mrs. Newhall. Mr. Murray is such a kind old gentleman he will make you feel at home at once. And Mrs. Newhall talks like a streak. She's nice, too." She raised her voice to call, "Annie, you may bring the luncheon now!"

ANNIE—a heavy-browed, big-boned girl who clogged about with surprising briskness—brought in omelet, salad, milk and cake. The two women ate together, talked at their leisure. Mrs. Lane asked many questions. Kerry, eating with the sudden fresh hunger of youth, answered at length. A careful listener could have gained from the conversation the most important data of the young girl's simple history. She had lived all the twenty years of her unepisodic life in a tiny up-state village—Blue Valley. Her father had died two years ago, her mother recently. These two deaths had come at the end of lingering sicknesses in which, unaided, she had nursed them both. Mrs. Lane, her father's only sister—a boarding-house in New York on her hands—had had time only to attend the funeral. Now, except for Mrs. Lane, Kerry was alone in the world. She had come to New York to earn her living. Her funds did not allow her to go to a business college, but she had bought a small typewriter and a book of instructions. She was determined to teach herself stenography and typewriting.

All this was what her sentences said, but fancy richly promised more, much more. Romance lay in ambush for her at every corner. Adventure might leap on her from above. Not that she said all this definitely, or even hinted at it. It came out, a marvelous but unanalyzable by-product of her talk.

The door-bell rang.

"There! That's Miss Darling!" Mrs. Lane exclaimed. "She's always early—the first to come home to luncheon—and she's always forgetting her key. Let's get away before she sees us. Here; I want to show you my fine kitchen."

The kitchen, lighted by perpetual gaslight, was big and neat.

"Where does that door lead?" asked the girl.

"Into the alley," her aunt answered. "There used to be a big yard to this house, but it was sold to the people who built the church."

"Oh, yes; I noticed that church," Kerry said. "Next door, to the east."

"No; not that. That's an old Episcopal church. We're set between two churches. The church I mean is the new Presbyterian church which faces on the south side of the next street. You'll see it all from your window. "I'll show you now."

Kerry followed her aunt up-stairs. It was not a big house. Two rooms in the basement, three above that, three and a bath on the second floor, four over them. Mrs. Lane led the way to the top floor.

"This is your room, Kerry dear," she said, opening the door at the back.

Kerry Lane crossed the threshold with a bounding step.

She stopped before the mirror and took off her hat. The great dark mass of her hair revealed itself—beautiful hair, strange hair—straight but springy with a kind of ferment in its dusky depths. But Kerry did not contemplate her hair. Those mirror-movements were purely mechanical. All the time she was looking about her.

"Why, what a beautiful window!" she exclaimed suddenly; a note of astonishment in her voice.

"I was waiting for you to notice that," Mrs. Lane said, with an overbrimming pride. "It's an oriel window."

The room had, in fact, two windows. The northern one was regular, rectangular. Over it, and behind muslin hangings, a white calendered curtain spread blankness. But the eastern one—that actually projected out of the room. It had a window-seat filled with cushions. Kerry ran to this, plumped kneeling upon it, pulled the muslin hangings aside.

"Oh—and look at the garden! But how strange, how deserted it seems!"

"You see," Mrs. Lane began, "years ago this house was the parsonage of the church you noticed—the old Episcopal church—the one next door. In those days, as I told you, a great big yard went with this house. But when they built the new Presbyterian

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church on the street above, they bought our yard. It is the back of the new Presbyterian church which you see coming up against your north window."

BUT Kerry paid no attention to the north window. It was the east window—the oriel—that monopolized her attention. She unclasped the oval casement door and leaned out. It looked down upon the back yard of the house on the next street, and across the yard to a grim gray wall pierced with three high Gothic windows.

The yard was in size the rather commodious average of old New York yards. A slender tree rose in one corner, but garden-plats, garden-paths had vanished in an infinity of weeds.

Mrs. Lane, with meticulous minuteness, was expounding the architectural sequestration of the garden.

"You see, it is built in between two churches. The Episcopal church is L-shaped; it runs round the corner. The part next to us is Sunday-school and lecture-hall. The main church is what you see across the garden. But the Presbyterian church was stopped by our house—apparently they would not sell this house to the church people. So, you see, that yard you are looking down into has church walls on three sides—south, east and west. We have no other back outlook except that house and yard. And your oriel—they say it was especially built for the minister—is the only window in the neighborhood that looks out on it, except, of course, those in the place to which the garden belongs.

Kerry, her hands resting lightly on the window-sill, inspected the house across the yard. Double wrought-iron balconies shaded the two lower stories. Over their grill-work thick vines, freshly painted with their luminous summer green, threw out a spume of filmy tendrils as they climbed. The windows were all closed and shuttered. Decades of dust and neglect molded upon them.

"Who lives there now?" Kerry asked.

"Nobody," her aunt answered. "It belongs to an eccentric old bachelor—very rich, of course. He has lived for the past twenty years in Florence. Probably he never will come back to New York, but he says he wants his house in case he does."

Kerry turned to the north window, snapped up the curtain with a decisive movement of her little hand. True to prophecy, a blank dark wall frowned starkly in her face. She blanked it doubly with the curtain.

"My own, own room! And in New York! Aunty K, I'm going to hug you again, and I warn you I shall keep on hugging you until I get used to the fact that I am really and truly here."

Mrs. Lane submitted to this hug, and to subsequent ones, not only with equanimity but with an immediate response.

She was a striking woman. Her hair was as luxuriant as the black masses that bundled so awkwardly on Kerry's head, but it was more turbulent and it was quite white. And just as through Kerry's hair there ran a dusky glow like fire smoldering in its depths, in Mrs. Lane's appeared a silver-white incandescence. Mrs. Lane's brows and lashes had not changed color. But although they made a berry-brown contrast with that massed rough silver, they harmonized perfectly with the big, limpid brown eyes. They were extraordinary eyes. Even the curious ashen linelessness of her face, its impassivity, its inflexibility could not belie their expressiveness. Her figure had gone the misshapen way of uncared-for middle age, but there was almost a savage vigor to her movements.

"My room's across the way in the front of the house," Mrs. Lane explained. "At first, I thought you might like a front room better; but I finally decided you'd rather have the window on the garden."

"You were quite right," Kerry admitted. "I much prefer the window and the garden."

"Oh, while I think of it," her aunt continued, "I've got something for you." With one of her vigorous, swooping movements she disappeared from the room. In another moment she came back, a great crumpled white-tissue-paper bundle under her arm. Unrolling it on the bed, she displayed, first, a pair of gold slippers, a little worn, of a curious, old-fashioned cut, high-heeled and with broad crystal buckles. Then came—old, too—a big Spanish shawl in a soft, faded sage-green silk. It was deeply hung with a green-silk fringe, brilliantly embroidered at the corners with massed flowers in orange, rose, cherry, and with vines in every shade of green.

"These were your mother's," Aunty K

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explained. "I've kept them I don't know *how* long."

"Oh, Aunty K, how beautiful—how beautiful!"

Kerry plumped down on the bed and swiftly took her shoes off.

"You're got your mother's feet," Mrs. Lane commented, "the same beautiful high instep. Fit you perfectly, don't they?"

With her skirts pulled up, Kerry marched about the room, her down-bent eyes fixed on her golden progress. Tiring of this finally, she threw the shawl about her, examining in the mirror the effect on her slender shoulders of this burden of brilliant embroidery, ran her fingers through the trailing, intricately-knotted fringe.

"That fringe is all hand-tied," Aunty K explained.

"It's wonderful!" Kerry agreed. Reverting to the slippers, she jumped up on a chair and surveyed her feet in the mirror.

"Now," said Mrs. Lane presently, "I guess I'd better get back to the kitchen and see how the girls are making out alone. Would you like to come down into the dining-room now and meet all the folks?"

"No," Kerry decided instantly; "I think I'll wait until dinner. When my trunk comes I'll put on something else. You mustn't expect, though, that I have got any pretty clothes, Aunty K. You know what Blue Valley is like."

"Of course," Mrs. Lane reassured her. "After you're settled, perhaps you'll feel like doing some shopping. We'll see if we can't run down some bargains. If you come down-stairs, be sure to draw the curtains over your window. That will keep the room cool for to-night."

LEFT alone, Kerry went first to the oriel window, and hanging her slim length to a perilous proportion out of it, carefully surveyed the garden again, surveyed quite as carefully the house. English sparrows were going about their noisy business; otherwise the quiet of a sultry, breezeless metropolitan heat lay on the jungle of weeds and bushes.

After a while Kerry pulled herself back into the room, drew the curtain over the white glare of the sun. Then she moved the bed against the window and, opening her little brown traveling-bag, disposed the trifling toilet-articles which it contained on the bureau-top and in bureau drawers. Last, she lifted the miniature typewriter onto the little white table and opened the case. Presently, with slow and amateurish movements, she inserted a sheet of typewriting paper in its vitals, began a slow and amateurish tapping of the keys. When Mrs. Lane returned she was still absorbed.

"Everybody's gone now," said Mrs. Lane, "and the house is empty. Don't you want me to show you the rooms?"

"Yes; do," Kerry begged. "I like to see where people live."

That journey of inspection started with Mr. Murray's room, the first-floor front (what should have been the drawing-room) and ended with Miss Darling's second-floor-front hall bedroom. Mrs. Lane stopped in each room to give a description of the occupant. Names swirled through Kerry's mind —Udell, Bale, Twirter, Newhall, Nickel. She listened with the interest of a girl who has met few people in the course of her life. Their vivid, brisk, closely-woven talk was twice broken. Twice the strands had to be caught up and twisted into a braid again.

These two interruptions proceeded from people who had come to look at rooms.

"I've let the room across the hall from yours," Mrs. Lane remarked on her first return.

"The one with the windows looking right out on the church wall?"

"Yes. A young girl's taken it, and glad she was to get anything. She told me she tramped this neighborhood for three days. Her name's Ryan—Delight Ryan. She's no older than you, I should say, and *pretty!* Pretty as a picture. It will be nice to have a girl so close to you, won't it?"

"Yes; I'll like that," Kerry agreed eagerly.

"She saw your door open and seemed to think *that* was the room I had to let; for she stepped in before I could tell her it was already taken. She was crazy about it. She spoke of how pretty the window was and the white furniture and the fresh new curtains. I sort of think she was working up to offering more money than she thought I was getting for it. But when I told her my niece had it, she didn't say anything more about money. She's an unusually pretty girl—black hair and gray eyes. Her hair's cut short in the neck, the way so many wear it now, and curls up at the ends. Full of life, too."

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From the second interruption Mrs. Lane returned no less jubilant.

"You've brought me luck, Kerry," she declared. "I've let my last room. Another girl. I say 'girl;' she is really a married woman, but she seems only a girl—not a day older than you, I should think. A widow, she told me. A war-widow, I guess. Her mourning is so fresh and she looks so sad. Pretty as paint. She wanted your room, too. I had closed the door, but she seemed to sense that it would have an outlook, and asked if it was let. When I said it was, she asked if she could see it. So I showed it to her. She stood on tiptoe for a full minute, staring toward your oriel as though she'd like to sit in the window-seat. But you'd moved your bed over so she couldn't even look out. She seemed to know the neighborhood. She asked me if our house didn't back up onto the old Van Dordrecht place. She was full of questions about the Van Dordrecht house, but of course I hadn't much to tell her. She said she was grateful to find a spot to lay her head. She had been trapesing round this vicinity for two days. Paid in advance. Her name's Deane—Mrs. Deane."

These interruptions came early in the afternoon. Later, there occurred another.

"It's your trunk," Mrs. Lane called up to her niece, relaying the information from the second floor as Annie had relayed it from the first. "I'm having it sent right up."

THE two women retired to Kerry's room, unpacked the little, old, pinkish-papered, brown-lined trunk that looked as though it had come out of a country garret.

Kerry took off her white blouse and the skirt of her little brown suit, hung them both carefully on hangers in the closet, poured water into the bowl. In the midst of her ablutions the bell rang.

"There! There's the evening paper!" Mrs. Lane exclaimed. "Do you mind if I run right down and get it? The war got me into the habit of reading the news at once."

"Of course I don't." Kerry laughed a little.

Mrs. Lane's step, returning, was not so light as going. She was apparently lost in the news.

"Anything important?" Kerry's fresh voice called in its lightest accent, as her aunt's slow steps started up the second flight.

"Nothing very *important.*" Mrs. Lane's voice came a little muffled, as though, with bent head, she read as she walked. "An interesting story on the first page. There's a young girl disappeared from a wealthy family in New York——"

"A young girl!" Kerry's voice made soprano repetition.

"Her name's Diana Darnston. She seems to have been kidnaped——"

"Kidnaped!" Kerry's voice, almost treble now, repeated the word. But apparently her attention did not catch even on this. She pulled out the pins from her hair, and it fell in a great mass, fine but springy, dark yet warmly rutilant below her waist. She slashed at it ruthlessly with a wide, long comb.

"Yes. It is very sensational." Mrs. Lane was now ascending the stairs with her usual swiftness. "The girl was to come into twenty million dollars—maybe more—on her twenty-first birthday—June twenty-first. Seems they have always kept her close for fear something might happen to her. She had never been anywhere alone in her life. And this morning she just disappeared as though she'd melted into air. Nobody saw her leave the house. She had no friends or lovers—" Mrs. Lane's voice, growing lighter, had been coming nearer and nearer, and now Mrs. Lane herself appeared in the doorway. "Does this interest you, Kerry?" she asked.

Creamy-shouldered, dusky-haired, vivid-lipped, Kerry cast a glance at her aunt by way of her own reflection in the mirror—a glance radiant and agitated.

"Very much," she answered. "Keep right on if you don't mind my interrupting to ask you questions. I am still so excited, Aunty K, that a girl's being kidnaped seems a mere trifle to me."

"They don't *know* she was kidnaped," Mrs. Lane admitted. "Only, if she wasn't, they can't see why she would run away. She had everything a girl could possibly want, and she was going to have twenty million dollars or even more in a month or so."

"Of course she has eloped with somebody," Kerry decided.

"Perhaps. But they say she had no lover that anybody ever knew of."

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"Who is 'they'?" Kerry demanded.

"Her aunt and uncle, a Mr. and Mrs."—Mrs. Lane consulted the paper again—"Guirk. Queer name, isn't it? They say she has never been alone with a man in her life. It seems that when she was a child the aunt was afraid that she'd be kidnaped and when she grew up that somebody would marry her for her money. And so they have always watched her as a cat would a mouse."

Kerry burst into a rill of laughter.

"Aunty K, this girl bores me. How does it happen you're so interested?"

Her aunt laughed, but did not answer the question.

"There's the dinner-gong. Come right down, my dear, just as soon as you are dressed. I want you to meet everybody in the house. Just think! I have three new people at the table to-night."

The excitement which had been mounting in Kerry all the afternoon now actually exploded. She finished her dressing in a kind of frenzy. She wanted to meet these new people and she feared to meet them. She gave a last glance at the mirror. She was dressed so simply that there was little chance of any detail being wrong. Nevertheless, she surveyed herself with minute interest. Then she darted out of the room, flew down the three flights of stairs like some winged creature. The last step almost precipitated her into the dining-room. For an instant she paused in the doorway.

"Diana Darnston," were the first words that she heard.

IMMEDIATELY following Kerry's appearance, Mrs. Lane flashed into the dining-room, introduced her to the circle of boarders and then flashed kitchenward. To Kerry's consciousness, the Mr. Murray who sat at her left, the Mr. Bale who sat at her right, the Mrs. Newhall who sat directly opposite came out sharply from the ring of faces. The rest melted in a blur under her embarrassed gaze.

Perhaps old Mr. Murray guessed her confusion. At any rate, he opened conversation at once and, without waiting for her comments, went on from sentence to sentence.

"We have been expecting you, Miss Lane, for nearly a week. Your aunt has been so excited over your visit that I told her she'd burst if it was put off. She has shown us all her pictures of you, so that we feel as if we knew you, too. I must say, though, I don't think they flatter you any." The glance he gave the little figure, very modest in its light-colored silk gown, but widely luminous as to excited gray eyes and vividly colorful as to softly parted lips, was a brief one. "Snap-shots don't flatter as a rule. You will find it hot in New York at this time of year, but not unpleasant. I hope you like the city."

"My aunt is not more excited than I am," Kerry averred. "I haven't been able to sleep for ever so many nights at the thought of coming to live in New York."

"I know just how you feel." Mrs. Newhall reeinforced Mr. Murray's overtures with a chatty kind of friendliness. "I come from down Maine way—Center View. I go home every summer. I've known the time that, when the train drew into the Grand Central Station, I'd get so keyed up my heart would beat something awful. But after twenty-five years of going and coming, you get accustomed to it."

Mrs. Newhall's middle-age-and-past was as comfortable as Mr. Murray's was meager. Her features were little and squeezed, and they were all crowded together into the middle of her round, good-natured face. Her complexion was turning yellow, and she used too much of a glaring violet-white powder. While she talked, she surveyed with satisfaction the glitter of the rings on her faded old hands. When she ceased to talk—automatically—her eyes went to the mirror opposite, and she examined with appreciation a profile lighted by the sparkle of diamond ear-drops.

"Have you ever been in New York before, Miss Lane?" a woman's voice asked from the other end of the table.

Kerry craned forward to meet the eye of her interlocutor. Out of the buzz of names which her aunt had let loose in her mind emerged miraculously one. And it was the one which went with that large pink face, craftily diminished by down-drooping loosenesses of hay-colored hair. "Darling"—that was the name—"Darling."

"Only a few times, Miss Darling, and not for long."

"It takes a long time to know New York," Miss Darling informed her, with a slight touch of patronage. "It's a charming city, and yet sometimes I wish I might never see it again. I——"

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But here she was interrupted by an arrival. Mrs. Lane bustled in from the kitchen to introduce Mrs. Deane. Kerry settled herself back out of the conversation.

Mrs. Deane acknowledged the introductions with a faint bow and a murmur so low that it was virtually inaudible. After a moment that formality which a new arrival sets fell on them all. Miss Darling examined the newcomer with a narrow-eyed scrutiny which rapidly developed a quality of disapproval. Mrs. Deane herself was apparently more embarrassed than anybody. She kept her hands in her lap, and her head drooped as though her eyes were bent on them. Kerry studied her stealthily.

LITTLE, slender, a girl for years, she was dressed in the shimmerless black of mourning, mitigated only by dabs of white at the neck and wrists—her only ornament a small chased-gold ring on her left hand. It was not strange that her head drooped when one considered the weight of hair it carried. Heavily waved, elaborately curled, twisted, interwoven, it massed to almost a grotesque disproportion of dense blackness. She was olive-colored, and but for the warmth of her drooped mouth might have seemed ill. But when finally Miss Darling addressed a remark to her and her eyelids came up, the flash of the green-gray irises under them set all ideas of ill health flying. Her eyes were big and brilliant, but they were tragic in expression. Their sadness, however, in no wise diminished their aliveness. In the dead olive pallor of her face they were like insets of a very thin, exquisitely-clear green ice. And with the light of those eyes illuminating her face, she suddenly became alert—a tingling, electrifying bit of womanhood.

Mr. Nickel, a thin young man who sat on Miss Darling's right, was the first to recover from this invasion of beauty and sadness.

"Have you seen the evening papers, Mrs. Deane? We are all going nuts on the Darnston case."

"Yes," Mrs. Deane answered, her voice languid and low. "I have looked them over. It is a very strange case, isn't it?"

"The latest editions say," Chester Bale intoned, in his high, vibrating voice, "that they've already offered a reward of fifty thousand dollars for the girl, alive or dead."

"Fifty thousand dollars!" Joe Nickel repeated. "*Fifty* thousand! My hevings! I'm going to take a day off and just look at girls."

"Why do you call it 'taking a day off'?" Miss Darling demurred. This brilliant stroke of sarcasm convulsed the table. The Twirter twins went off into spasms of giggles.

"They've had a lot of tragedy in that family," swiftly interpolated Mrs. Newhall, bridling for a moment, but rewarding herself in the mirror. "That was a strange thing about the girl's twin brother being drowned. Did they ever find the body?"

"Oh, yes," Mr. Murray answered her. "About two months after he disappeared. What a pity, when the lad had such a future!"

"Perhaps it wasn't *his* body they found," Mrs. Newhall suggested. "Perhaps he ran away."

"But what would be his motive?" Mr. Murray objected. "Pretending to be dead if he wasn't dead."

"Who'd kick a fortune of twenty millions in the face?" Mr. Bale demanded.

Again conversation was interrupted by a newcomer. And again, as though electrically warned, Mrs. Lane flashed from the kitchen to make the introductions.

This time it was Miss Ryan. No interval of embarrassment manifested itself in Miss Ryan's case, and no interval of constrained silence. Miss Ryan received and responded to the introductions with a coolness almost chiseled. She seated herself beside Mrs. Newhall, unfolded her napkin, poured herself out some water and took up the thread of conversation as though she had been there all the time.

"You're talking about the Darnston case? Isn't it weird? I've read every evening paper, and they all say the same thing. Nobody in that family or any of the servants has any idea how the girl got out of the house if she went of her own accord, or how she was taken out if she was abducted. Nobody can guess how she put it over. Isn't it enough to make one believe in levitation or spiritualism, or the ouija-board or *any* of those queer things? I think she threw herself out of the bedroom window into the river. You can perfectly see how she might get into a suicidal condition worrying over her brother's death."

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Quite openly the boarding-house circle studied the author of these vivacious remarks. The faint disapproval which Mrs. Deane's appearance had developed in Miss Darling's eyes deepened, as they scrutinized Miss Ryan, to a definite antagonism.

"You'd better give that tip to Tom Udell when he comes in, Miss Ryan," Joe Nickel suggested. "He's on the *Evening Planet*."

"I guess I'll be more interested in what he has to say than he will in what I have to say," Miss Ryan admitted, and she laughed.

Her laugh was as pretty as a bird's voice. But that was not strange. She herself was so impregnated with prettiness that there was a surplus plenty to heap high the silver cup of her mirth. She was little and slender, dark and vivid, active and graceful. Her short hair clustered richly about the olive pointedness of her face. She was always shaking it back with a toss of her head. *Her* head did not droop. It always tilted upward, as though held deliberately at that angle to display a lovely sloping line of neck. After Mrs. Lane turned on the electricity the light seemed always to be catching in her large eyes—gray, apparently, but made azure by velvety blue-black pupils, to catch on the little edge of pearl which her smile disclosed—to catch there and stay.

BEFORE anybody could reassure her on this point, she turned the subject swiftly.

"Has anybody seen Elsie Lennore's latest film?"

"Yes," answered the ubiquitous Mr. Nickel; "and, take it from me, it's a hummer! It's a wiz!"

"I guess I'll go to-night, then," Miss Ryan decided. "I heard it wasn't so good as the last."

"Say!" Joe Nickel burst out, with the air of one who has suddenly made an astounding discovery. "You look like Elsie Lennore! You're a ringer for her. Did any one ever tell you that, Miss Ryan?"

"About a million," Miss Ryan admitted serenely. "I can't see it myself, though."

"But you do your hair exactly as she does." Miss Darling's glance was oblique, but the suggestion was voiced in her most dulcet tone.

"No," Miss Ryan came back; "she does hers exactly as I do mine."

"Who is Elsie Lennore?" Kerry interrupted.

A hum of amusement ran along the table.

"Just think of anybody who's never heard of Elsie Lennore!" Mr. Bale lilted at the end of it.

Kerry colored so furiously that her confusion had almost a panic in it. It was Mr. Murray who made kindly explanation.

"She's the most successful woman movie star in the world, Miss Lane, and her manager—Macgill—is the most successful in the business. A Macgill film is always a success. Her salary is more than twice that of the President of the United States. And she gets a big share of the profits besides. Don't you have movies in that village of yours up-state? What's its name——"

"Blue Valley," Kerry prompted him. "No; there are no movies there. It's a tiny, tiny place. There are movies in neighboring towns, but I have never been to one. And I have never happened to hear of Elsie Lennore. You see, I've had responsibilities. There's been sickness in the family—" Kerry hesitated.

"My goodness!" Miss Ryan remarked in an aside to Mrs. Deane, who received the comment with a faint, absent smile. "Blue Valley must be a dead little burg." But aloud she addressed herself to Kerry. "I will show you some pictures I have of Elsie Lennore. By the way, do you know that she is in New York and that she's lost her ring? She's advertising for it in all the evening papers. Small gold ring, heavily chased, the ad says. It's the one she always wears. I've often noticed it on her hands in close-ups. Must be a mascot of some kind."

"Yes; I read the ad," Joe Nickel coincided, "and I've noticed the ring."

"I wonder why she says, 'Return to Elsie Lennore personally,' " Miss Ryan went on. "I should think she'd have somebody else—Macgill, for instance—appear for her. I see she gives Macgill's office as her address. And I should think she'd realize that people would expect a big reward from her."

"Yes," Joe Nickel said, with an air of uncanny shrewdness. "But that struck me as foxy. You see, the ad says there's no intrinsic value to the ring. She hopes to tempt the finder by a big reward and the chance to meet Elsie Lennore personally."

"But do you believe she'll really *see* the finder?" Miss Ryan asked.

"You bet she won't! She's never been interviewed. She's the hardest person to

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see—they say it's easier to get to the President of the United States. You see, her graft consists in looking like a child. They don't want the world to know that she's a woman. That's why she keeps so close. You'll see she'll be very quiet here in New York. None of the reporters will get to her. No; probably one of her secretaries would act for her."

"Or Macgill, perhaps," Miss Ryan suggested carelessly.

"Oh, no," Nickel said, with an air of omniscience. "Macgill would never bother about such a picayune affair. He's almost as hard to get to as Elsie Lennore herself. By the way, did you know that there'd been rumors of a break between her and Macgill?"

"*No!* For goodness' sake! What's it all about?"

"I don't know. They say she left Macgill once to come to New York to talk to Giddings, of the Sidro Films. But Macgill caught up with her in Chicago. They patched it up and she returned to California."

"Oh, here's Tom!" Mr. Bale ejaculated suddenly. "What's the dope on the Darnston case, Tom?"

MR. UDELL smiled, but his smile was a fleeting one, and he immediately curtained it under a look of importance. Mr. Udell was the possessor of a drab-haired, drab-eyed, drab-skinned face from which hung a nose so large that for a long time it arrested all observation of his other features. At Bale's question his importance increased to a portentous degree.

"It's a very strange case," he commented; "very strange. There's a lot behind it all that hasn't got into the papers yet."

"But what do they suspect?" Nickel continued encouragingly. "Did she elope? Was it an unhappy love-affair? Was it suicide? Miss Ryan here— Oh, by the way, shake hands with Miss Ryan, Tom. Meet Mr. Udell, Miss Ryan, and, while you're about it, Tom, Mrs. Deane and Miss Lane— Miss Ryan thinks she threw herself out of the window into the river."

Mr. Udell presented his nose and, in instant sequence, a bow to the three ladies.

"Pleased to meet you, I'm sure. Not a chance!" He disposed tersely of Miss Ryan's theory. "All the windows in the house that looked on the river are screened in iron. She couldn't have got through them—there isn't space enough. The only other places where she could have thrown herself off are the roof and the back-yard wall. And she didn't go onto the roof or into the yard that morning. That's flat."

"What does she look like?" Miss Ryan demanded. "And why didn't they publish her picture?"

"That's one of the things which makes the case so difficult. They haven't a picture of her—none of any kind."

"*Mercy!* How strange!" Mrs. Newhall commented. "How's that, I wonder?"

"Well, several reasons. Her aunt—this Mrs. Guirk—said they were planning to have photographs taken on her twenty-first birthday. Now she's heartbroken it wasn't done before, of course. It seems the old woman's never permitted the slightest publicity about the twins. She's always had a wheel that somebody would kidnap them and hold them for ransom. She's never had their pictures taken for fear that in some way the papers would get hold of them and there'd be big Sunday stories about the millionaire kids."

"How are they going to find her, then?" Miss Ryan demanded.

"Well, it won't be easy," Tom Udell promised, with the grimness of those who have inside information. "The old girl doesn't give a very good idea of Diana—she has no gift of description." He fixed his eyes on Miss Ryan's face. "Little and slim—oval-faced—olive complexion—hair almost black and lots of it. Mrs. Guirk says she could sit on it."

"In these days, when everybody has short hair," Miss Ryan interpolated, "that will make it easy to identify her."

"No, it won't," Tom Udell stated positively; "for she cut it off before she ran away."

"How do they know she cut it off?" Miss Ryan demurred.

"They found a long hank of hair on the floor behind the bureau. Apparently, as fast as she cut it off she laid it on the top of her bureau, then burned it all up in the fireplace. One lock had slipped behind, and they found it."

"Say—is that right or is it just newspaper talk?" Bale tremuloed.

Udell impaled him with a shaft of drab-colored sufferance.

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"A friend of mine on the *Planet* held the hair in his hand." He disposed of Bale's tenor objection.

"What color are her eyes?" Kerry asked.

"Mrs. Guirk makes a point of her eyes," Tom Udell answered, transfixing Kerry with his nose. "She says her eyes are the hardest to describe of anything about her. *She* said hazel, but she added that they all depended on the color the girl was wearing. Sometimes they looked blue, sometimes gray and sometimes green—she's seen them when they were even yellow."

Mrs. Deane hesitatingly broke into the conversation.

"What did she wear when she left the house?"

Mr. Udell wheeled his nose from Kerry's direction and aimed it at Mrs. Deane.

"Gray," he answered tersely. "All gray. Gray suit, gray hat, gray shoes and gray stockings. The only thing she took away with her was a gold ring she wore on her left hand. It belonged to her mother—a little gold ring, heavily chased—like your wedding-ring, Mrs. Deane."

MRS. DEANE looked at the golden glitter on the white ringed finger of her dimpled left hand as though from a new point of view. Others surveyed that glitter, too.

"But I can't understand what was her motive in running away." Kerry's eager voice laid a delicious interrogative freshness along the silence.

"The Guirks did not think the motive was hers at all," Tom Udell answered. "They think she was abducted."

"But if she cut her hair herself," Mr. Murray said in his faded old voice, "she was deliberately disguising herself. She must have gone of her own accord."

"Of course she went of her own accord," Tom Udell agreed a little impatiently. "The Guirks think somebody actually got into the house, chloroformed her and cut her hair off. But that's all tommy-rot. *Whenever* she went, or *wherever* she went, she went willingly."

"Well, what kind of girl was she?" Miss Darling asked.

"Nobody knows much about her now," Udell answered. "There's not been time enough to go into that."

"She may be married—to the chauffeur—or something," Chester Bale put in jocularly.

"But if she's married," Mr. Murray demurred, "there's no reason why she shouldn't come forward and admit it to-morrow."

"Say!" Joe Nickel burst out. His face had assumed a look of preternatural cunning. "If that girl dies, the Guirks come into all the money, don't they?"

"Take a jitney, Joe!" Udell ordered, with a succinct but kindly patronage. "Everybody's thought of that, but it don't hold water. For one reason, they don't need money. Old Darnston left them five million apiece twenty years ago. Every one figures it's a great deal more by now. If the Guirks had five millions then, you can bet they've got a good deal more now. They are people of the highest respectability—pillars of the church and all that. And then it's as plain as the nose on your face that they love the girl to death."

"What do the Guirks look like?" Kerry inquired.

"Oh, Mrs. Guirk's an awfully nice old party," Udell admitted, with the condescension that he always displayed toward people whose private affairs became his by reason of their getting into the papers. "You'd trust her with your last cent. She's oldish and fat and roly-poly, with a big, round, motherly face. As calm and loving and placid as the family cow. Looks like the old grandmother you used to visit every summer in the country.

"What's Guirk like?" Mr. Murray inquired.

"Oh, a sort of old, Santa-Claus-looking party," Udell vouchsafed languidly; "not fat, though—*thin* and white-haired, like his wife, and with all the whiskers in the world—the kind that is always Santa Claus for the Sunday-school Christmas tree. Warner—that's the man we put on the job—said you've seen them both at prayer-meeting a hundred times when you were a kid. What do you think? Guirk, giving Warner the eye, offers him a drink. Guirk explains that he is a prohibitionist himself but he keeps a little for friends. Warner accepts with alacrity, you betchyeh. Warner expects some swell vintage, Eighteen hundred at least. When he comes to imbibe, what d'you suppose it is? Some of the old lady's elderberry wine she put up last summer."

Udell's cosmopolitan audience laughed loud and long at this delicious provincialism. There came a murmur from Mrs. Newhall:

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"If only my husband were alive! He had the most wonderful faculty. He always guessed who committed murders. I used to say it was a gift, but he said it was only brains."

IT WAS after nine o'clock when Kerry returned to her room. Dusk was concentrating to darkness. She pulled the curtain away from a sky so full with the shimmer of stars that her passing gaze caught on it. An instant she stood, vaguely disturbed by the mystery of those far-off sidereal fires—wondering——

And then voices caught in her listening ear; perfume laved her. Her eyes, sinking, sought the secret garden.

For another interval, longer this time, she stood still, too paralyzed to move, too stark with amazement to utter the exclamation which hung visibly between her parted lips.

The secret garden had *gone*—disappeared—vanished so completely that it might have floated off into space like a bubble—and in its place a scene from the "Arabian Nights."

Kerry did not, in the conventional gesture of surprise, rub her eyes. She became, if possible, only a little more still, and she continued to stare, stupefied, breathless.

A rug, so big that it filled the garden, had been laid down over the cut weeds, a great rectangle of gleaming, golden plush, touched at irregular intervals with an Oriental pattern in blue. Along the gray church wall to the east, set in golden tubs symmetrically arranged between Gothic windows, there rose, as round as the circle Giotto drew, great green balls of bay trees. At one side hung a canopied hammock, blue and gold, too. It was piled with cushions. Which was stranger, the Cubist shapes of those cushions or the Futurist colors, Kerry could not decide. And they were trimmed kaleidoscopically with patches of contrasting colors, inset with mirrors, webbed with embroidery, bordered with fur, hung with tassels of black. Kerry's eye caught on a great irregular splash—like ink—on a big circular cushion of carmine, then passed to other wonders—a lengthwise three-part mirror, framed in carved silver, standing near the hammock. Here, there, yonder, great silken umbrellas, like monstrous mushroom bubbles of thin gold, suspending lanterns which, repeating all the gay colors in the cushions, flushed the garden with a golden light. And the focus of all this—a big round table, jet-black and shining, with golden sphinx-heads boldly carved on its three legs. On the table a light that poured yellow radiance, a tennis-racket, a trio of tennis-balls, glass flagons holding brilliantly gleaming liquids, a heap of pearl-colored lace, a tiny half-opened fan, a trio of infinitesimal jeweled boxes——

It was at this table, sipping coffee from cups of white china lacquered in a black geometric pattern, or drinking glittering liquids from tiny glasses, that four people—three men and a woman—sat. And those people——

Back of them, the door of the house, opening on a cave of gloom, suddenly became luminous. Light poured through cascading tendrils of vines. Emerged an old Chinaman, so withered and dried that he looked like a forked autumn branch from whose angles swung Chinese clothes of shining black. He bore a silver tray on which was arranged a siphon of soda, a silver bowl of ice, two whisky-bottles. White-shod, light-footed, he drifted as noiselessly as a blown autumn leaf across the silken surface of the yellow rug, noiselessly placed the contents of the tray on the ebony surface of the table, noiselessly drifted back into the house. An infinitesimal furry dog—show-white—scampered after him, a rill of bells marking the tiny leaps of its progress. As though roused by his fairy tinkle, the black patch on the hammock stirred, lifted, and gradually ballooned into an enormous cat.

The men, Kerry decided instantly, looked like the men you saw everywhere. At first she gave them scant attention. But the woman— Kerry stared and stared. She was talking, talking with such an exuberance of phrase, talking with such a flurry of gesture, talking at so impetuous a speed that at times her excitement pulled her up from her chair and sent her walking about the garden, small hands clasped at her back, small head pulled high on a slender neck to the loveliest of scornful lines, chin, whimsically peaked, pointing upward. She was young. She was dark. She was beautiful. She was—yes; she was the tallest woman that Kerry had ever seen. She wore a gown—Kerry's experience offered no parallel

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for the glisteny, gleamy, goldeny stuff—as slim as an umbrella-case. It turned the woman into a great golden serpent. It had no neck—that gown. It had no sleeves. It had no back. It was held on over the shoulders by strings of golden beads.

As for the woman's face— Eyes! They were not eyes, but great gray dusky stars, visibly rayed. Mouth! Not a mouth at all but a crimson rose with a nap like velvet. Hair! Her hair was more surprising than either. Black as carved jet, it turned her brow to alabaster, changed her ears to coral; it tried to thrust pallor into the olive of her skin. Failing in this, it rose to an elaborate height, was itself reenforced by a high, scoop-shaped tortoise-shell comb. From her ears hung earrings of cut jade, shaped like little lanterns which, dropping tassels of pearls, swept the shoulders. About the neck flowed a string of pearls which, knotted at the waist, dripped to the knees.

Kerry could not hear what the Golden Serpent was saying. Only a murmur came to her ears. Her remarks were all addressed to one man, and he was the one whom Kerry could see most easily.

AFTER a while Kerry could remove her eyes from the woman to the man—a tall, gaunt figure in a gray summer suit, topped by a head of straight, cropped red hair. His eyelashes were so long that only Kerry's intuition could have discovered that the eyes back of them went with the long Celtic lines of his face. He sat impassive, silent, almost moveless, under the Golden Serpent's flow of oratory. Once he dumped the pipe he was smoking, refilled it, thumbed the tobacco down, lighted it from a silver box which, scratched at the side, emitted flame, puffed it. But these motions flowed one into the other with the ease of long practise. They seemed only to accent his quiet.

The other men sat silent—not embarrassed, Kerry decided—a little as though this scene had occurred before and they were calmly waiting for the rebellion to end.

Such a phenomenon did occur. The lady threw her head back, hurled at the object of her abuse a basilisk glance.

"Joshua," she cried, and she inveighed high heaven with an uplifted bijou fist, "I hate the sight of you, and I curse the day I ever laid eyes on you!"

One of the other men opened conversation with Joshua with what Kerry felt to be a slightly embarrassed air. But this wore away as he himself took the floor, describing—no, Kerry decided, *explaining*—something. He waxed enthusiastic after a while, even exhortatory. He also tended to emphasize his speech with gesture. He was a young man, stoutish, much better-looking than Joshua. His face maintained chiseled contours, even through a kind of facial fatness. His hair was of an indeterminate yellow-brown, but his short, stiffly-cut mustache was sheer gold. His eyes came forward, a little enlarged by rimless glasses.

He whom the Golden Serpent called "Joshua" listened moveless, again non-committal, his long lashes covering his Irish eyes, his pipe emitting regular volleys of smoke.

The third man—his gray lounging-suit made Kerry decide that the tennis-racket belonged to him—alone remained absolutely silent. His back was turned to Kerry. His arms were apparently folded. She liked the whip-lash strength of the slender seated figure; she wished he would turn. His eyes—were they, Kerry wondered, fixed on the Golden Serpent's brilliant face? Somehow he interested her more than the other three.

And then, while Kerry questioned if the deadlock in the conversation would keep the scene fixed under her gaze all night long, there came a swift turn in events. As though suddenly called by the hypnotic power of Kerry's intense gaze, the Golden Serpent lifted her eyes to the oriel window.

Kerry was seized, not with the panic which so often attacks eavesdroppers but with the paralysis which sometimes envelops them. For a moment she could not move. The Golden Serpent suffered no such paralysis. Her sharpened gaze did not waver. But apparently she murmured something which called the men's attention to her find.

But as the three pairs of masculine eyes impaled her, the inhibition which lay on Kerry dropped away. She leaped from her seat and hurried to the farthest corner of the room, stood with her face to the wall, her slender hands veiling the blushes which surged fiercely up to her hair. How long she stood there she did not know. For her mind, whipped by her embarrassment to a merry-go-round, brought back to her memory whirling details of the scenes she had

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just witnessed. After an instant they seemed to stop—to stay painted on the inside of her lids.

And then—plop!—something fell on the floor beside her. She picked up a tennis-ball. About it, by means of an elastic band, was wound a folded paper. She opened it with trembling hands.

CINDERELLA:
Or shall we call you Cendrillon? We like the French form. Will you come to play with us in our garden for a while?

THE VAMP.
JOSH THE OGRE.
JAY THE HICK.
FAX THE NE'ER-DO-WELL.

For a moment Kerry stood quite still. And as she stood all kinds of thoughts revolved in her mind—a mad longing to say, "Yes;" a sense of indiscretion, perhaps peril; a madder longing to say, "Yes;" a thought of Aunty K; a madder longing still to say——

She wrote on another paper:

Yes. If you will open the gate to your garden, I can come through our back door.

CENDRILLON.

I prefer the French form, too.

She threw her mother's shawl over her shoulders. Then a thought seized her. She changed into the little gold slippers. She opened her door gently, stepped to the hall, listened. Oh, terror! Something sounded. But it was only a sudden bass snore. Stillness again.

Once in the kitchen she found the door easily enough and pulled the bolt. The cool touch of the outdoor air revealed to her that her cheeks were blazing. Just in front, the wide door of the garden lay open. She crept toward it. A thick, warm smother of perfume, exotic, caressing, enveloped her like a thrown blanket. She remembered now that, when she looked out of her window, perfume had caught her——

The four were all talking again—absorbed now. Even the third man was eloquent. He gesticulated. As Kerry paused, trembling like a hare on the threshold, his voice rushed upon her. Even in that panic of embarrassment she realized that she liked the sound of it. It was clean-cut, but it had a warm undertone—a something that, troubling even the night, stirred to a palpitance Kerry's very soul. Then she caught two words and she smiled inwardly, smiled outwardly. It must be the same all over New York that night—one inexhaustible topic of conversation. Was it the news sensation of the day which had spawned that violent argument?

"Diana Darnston" were the two words which greeted her entrance.

THE third man—the one whose face she had not yet seen—rose and came forward to meet her.

Kerry was conscious of a shock of disappointment. He was long and lean in figure. He was long and lean in face. His features wandered at their crooked, irregular will across his weather-beaten skin. His ears stood up batlike, red as the wattles of a turkey-cock. But——

"Welcome, Cendrillon!" he said—and he smiled and held out his hand. Quite simply, Kerry placed her hand in his. "You come on feet winged with flames," he added.

He drew her onto the rug. Her high heels sank in its plushy softness.

"We're mighty glad you came," he went on, still smiling. "You looked so—so"—he seemed to reach after a word; apparently he found one, but not the right one, for he attacked the adjective with a little diffidence— "so quaint, so like a miniature up there in your oriel window—all eyes. I assure you, Cendrillon, your eyes were as big as that table-top—and as black, though now I see they're gray. At any rate, we could not resist inviting you to join us."

But here the Golden Serpent interrupted. She had not risen; she lolled in her chair.

"And we'd fought so long that in another moment there would have been murder. You've saved *me* from the electric chair." She paused and coolly studied Kerry. And then, with a pounce that almost made Kerry jump and that pulled the Golden Serpent out of her seat and up to the last inch of her astonishing height: "Say—that's some shawl you're wearing! Spanish isn't it, Cendrillon?" She advanced. Kerry drew it off and handed it to her.

As she approached Kerry made a discovery, made another, made more—many— Those wide, starry eyes! They were the result of little blobs of black which rayed her eyelashes, and of artificially contrived, reenforcing, augmenting lid-shadows. That velvet-rose mouth! The

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lips were covered with a moist smear—a crimson deeper than blood and richer. Those glittering pink-ended fingers! In repose, they appeared to be dyed a deep strawberry. But, strangest of all, as she neared she slowly diminished in height. Heels high, mounting hair higher, Spanish comb highest—they had all helped to draw the Golden Serpent's figure out.

"Joshua!" she screamed suddenly. "A Spanish disguise! Nobody would ever recognize me. That never once entered my mind. Joshua, send somebody to-morrow to ransack this town for all the Spanish shawls in it." She threw Kerry's shawl over her shoulders.

IN THE mirror she studied herself keenly. Absently she reached to the table for the tiny jeweled boxes. One—a square one—opened, displayed a feathery fluff. She powdered her face, neck and shoulders. The other—slender—shot, at the touch of a spring, a crimson cylinder against her lips. Her mouth bloomed like a suddenly opened blood-red blossom. She smeared it so thickly that it compelled her to hold her lips with a delicious stiff poutiness. A moment more she gazed at herself, as at a picture whose purchase she was considering.

"My mind is made up!" she exclaimed exultantly. "Joshua, get that—*my* mind is made up!" She turned to Kerry. "Thank you, Cendrillon. You have given me the great idea." All her keenness melted in a smile softly charming. Kerry saw that her gray eyes were not gray at all. Close, they showed great, excited night-black pupils, surrounded by a narrow ring of yellow. They were like precious stones of an unbelievable brilliancy—a gray that was made up of a blue-black and gold. Suddenly she threw her arms about Kerry. She did not kiss her, but she bunted her exactly as though she were a little calf and Kerry the mother cow; then she gave her a little shake.

"I like you, Cendrillon," she announced, with crisp certainty; "we shall be friends."

The Golden Serpent lit a cigarette. The little white tube smoking between her fingers added to her costume the final Spanish touch.

"Call me 'godmother,' Cendrillon," she directed. "I'm going to be your fairy godmother, you little country mouse, you!"

"Thank you, godmother," Kerry managed to say. "Yes; I *am* a country girl. I just arrived in New York from up-state. I am terribly ignorant of everything. Why, when I told them at the table to-night that I'd never seen Elsie Lennore——"

"You've never seen Elsie Lennore?" the Golden Serpent interrupted her.

"No," Kerry faltered.

The Golden Serpent turned a stupefied gaze on Joshua.

"You've never seen Elsie Lennore?" Joshua repeated in an amazement that equaled the Golden Serpent's. "You've never seen— Cendrillon, I congratulate you. Sometimes I wish I'd never seen her myself."

For the first time the Golden Serpent laughed. And that laughter—a chain of liquid bubbles dropping from a golden string—should have bewitched the very night.

Kerry sank into a seat, tried to efface herself. The men of the party seemed suddenly to appreciate the degree of her shyness. They turned away from her. They began at once to talk. Joshua started it.

"Oh, it's all the same old thing, believe me," he insisted, with a touch of cynicism. Apparently he was reverting to the topic which Kerry's entrance had interrupted. "I am too old a New York bird to be worked up by this girl-disappearance thing. In a week or two they'll find her, married probably. That always happens. Does it inspire you, Jay?" He turned to the second man. "It might be a good idea——"

"Not yet," Jay answered. "To tell the truth, I've only looked at the papers."

"Let's not talk about it," the Golden Serpent broke in petulantly. "I'm tired of this Diana Darnston already. My head aches. Great goodness! How heavy this hair is!"

With characteristic swiftness both hands flew upward and—amazingly, unbelievably—she lifted her hair. Yes; *lifted* it. Massed curls, serried waves, twisted tendrils, high comb, all came off. As though it were a cap, she placed it on the table. Her own hair proved to be equally black, but short. She dashed her fingers through it. It broke at once into springy clusters of curls. In an instant—just as she had changed from a tall woman to a woman of Kerry's height—she changed from a mature woman to a girl

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of Kerry's age. Kerry stared, startled. The Golden Serpent caught her gaze, laughed. Then suddenly her face fixed in a grimace of uneasiness.

"I had forgotten *you* were here, Cendrillon. Of course you didn't know this wig was a—was—a disguise, and so—Cendrillon"—that uneasiness in her face began to tremble in her voice—"I'll have to ask you to promise something, Cendrillon." Kerry did not speak, but she looked at her godmother inquiringly. "You see, nobody knows I'm here. This wig, as I said, is a disguise. I can't tell you why yet. But I will some time—in a few weeks. Promise me, Cendrillon, you will tell nobody about this evening—this garden—me—*anything!*"

"I promise," Kerry agreed, after a pause in which she seemed to weigh this consideration with that.

"Another thing," the Golden Serpent charged her eagerly: "Would you mind pinning something over your window, so that nobody coming into your room can look down upon the garden?"

"Yes," Kerry agreed again; "I will gladly do that. I don't want anybody— You see, nobody knows I'm in the garden. I have something to conceal now as well as you."

BUT the Golden Serpent was not even listening. Her face had a curious expression, as though she listened to an inner suggestion, as though something in her own talk was making comment in her mind.

"Disguise!" she repeated. "Disguise!" Instantly Kerry seemed to pass out of her consciousness as if she had actually vanished from the garden. She flashed about in the direction of the two men. She threaded a catlike path between them, suddenly dropped in one lithe motion to a cross-legged bundle on the rug at their feet. "That's the big idea!" she announced dynamically. She plunged into exposition, vehement but deliberately low-voiced.

Kerry caught only phrases: "A disguise! Don't let them suspect— Seem a masquerade or a game."

With a sudden agreeing enthusiasm Jay took up her thesis.

"A disguise—yes—a masquerade or a game of some sort. Guess half-way through—or give it to them straight at the beginning—you can always get away with that—" He turned from Kerry and dropped his voice. Apparently the volume of speech which he poured out expounded these themes. Kerry heard nothing but emphasizing phrases.

The Golden Serpent drank it down.

"Let them know!" she ordered. "Let them *know!* From the beginning, let them know!" A pause. Then, suddenly: "That's it! That's it! We've got it! We've got it! I register joy. I register triumph. I register victory!"

She leaped to her feet and whirled about the yard in an improvised Spanish dance, her fingers dropping crisp, castanet-like snaps. She ended on a high pose, her hands flicking the air, her head thrown back—a bit blurred by a swirl of fringe.

"Come into the house!" she commanded. "Right this minute! Joshua, you old ogre you—for he is an ogre, Cendrillon—I've got you beaten to submission. Come upstairs, where we can have quiet. We can work the whole game out now while the idea's fresh. Excuse me, Cendrillon, for a while. Fax'll take care of you. We'll be back presently." And then, walking between the two men, interrupting them at will but paying no attention to their answers, she swept them into the house.

At the door she froze into one of the immobilities which were even more astonishing than her catlike swoops. Then she flew back to Kerry's side.

"Be very good to Fax, Cendrillon," she whispered in her ear. "He's just come back from four years over there—two with the French and two with the Americans. He doesn't know it yet, but he's crazy—crazy as a coot." She lifted her head. "I'm telling Cendrillon that you're crazy, Fax." Then she flitted into the house.

Fax's first remark was a question, was strange:

"Cendrillon, are you *Mrs.* Cendrillon or are you *Miss* Cendrillon?"

Kerry uncurled a little crimson smile.

"I am Miss Cendrillon." She uncovered a wider smile, which unloosed a glitter of white. "You don't know how much it amuses me to think of being Mrs. *Anything.*"

"You're not engaged to anybody?" Fax more strangely asked.

Kerry's smile distilled into liquid mirth. "I should say I wasn't!"

Fax's third question was strangest of all. "Cendrillon," it was, "will you marry

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me?" Then, before she could speak, "Now, don't say—don't say—" Suddenly he commanded. Then, "I beg of you—" Now he entreated. "Don't say all those futile, foolish things that people are expected to say—that you're so surprised, that you're——"

"I won't," Kerry promised him. "I'm not surprised. If this garden can happen, why shouldn't proposals happen? I don't know why you shouldn't ask me to marry you the first time you see me. I have always thought that the only kind of love which counts—the kind that happens at sight."

"But how do you know I love you? I've only asked you to marry me."

"Your voice told me the first time you spoke," Kerry assured him.

"My voice was right. I got it the instant you came in that door, with your eyes like saucers filled with melted, velvety night and your feet shod with flame. But I really didn't think I'd ask you to marry me tonight. I thought I might wait until tomorrow. Don't answer me, though——"

"Oh, no; I wasn't going to answer you," Kerry protested easily.

"I'm glad you understand," Fax approved. "But I want you to keep it in mind. Oh, I *am* glad you understand! I think it strange, though, that you do. Most everybody doesn't."

"I will keep it in mind," Kerry promised again. She added: "It's not surprising to *me* that I understand. People don't have to speak to me. All my life has been understanding the unexpressed, hearing the unspoken, seeing the invisible. But how is it that you do? I never expected that anybody else could. Certainly not a man."

"It was being over there, I suspect," Fax explained. "You see, I was demobilized only last week. Things happened to most of us. I'm not the same. None of us came back the same. And the world's not the same, either. There's a new one. I will show it to you. All the rest of my life is going to be just looking at that new world—and looking at it with you!"

"Looking at it," Kerry repeated. "How do you *look* at the new world?"

"By living here," Fax explained. "And there—and yonder—and betwixt and between and beyond—and back of all that. And by working at all kinds of jobs and knowing all kinds of people."

"I—I don't understand," Kerry faltered.

"I am going all over the world"—Fax amplified his words—"literally all over the world. At my pleasure and in my own way. I shall stop here and there, anywhere or nowhere, as I please. Here in *this* city I'll be Labor striking for its rights. There in *that* city I'll be Capital struggling for its privileges. Yonder I'll be the tax-collector. Betwixt I'll be the tramp on the roadside, and beyond I'll be the judge that tries him. I'll sell jewels for a living, and I'll hang paper. I'll run my own motors, and I'll turn conductor. I'll write for newspapers, and I'll print them. I'll be a waiter and guest in the same restaurant. I'll clerk it at the hotel where a year ago I lived in a suite. I will—" He interrupted himself, as though his theme had run down. "Aren't those flowers wonderful?" he suddenly demanded.

HER head in a swirl of ideas, mutely Kerry followed his glance. It rested on the church wall to the west—the one that she could not see from her oriel. Banked against it, growing from boxes concealed by their own vines, were strange white flowers, exotically shaped—pitchers and butterflies, elfin boats——

She followed the lead he offered.

"This morning this place was as remote and forsaken as the garden in Shelley's 'Sensitive Plant.' How did it all happen?"

"Cendrillon"—Fax smiled his beautiful friendly smile—"your godmother is a magician. Whatever she plans happens."

"How beautiful she is!" Kerry breathed.

"Yes; she's beautiful," Fax agreed. "Not so beautiful as you, though."

"Beautiful as me!" Kerry replied in amazement. She added sternly: "I am afraid you are going insane. Or is it a joke?"

"No; it's not a joke. I don't indulge in that kind of joking. You're a still moon, Cendrillon, but what a candle-power!"

"I—I—" Kerry made an abashed gesture with both her hands. "I want to believe you," she confessed abjectly. And then, as though she must open other channels to draw off her embarrassment: "But what gaiety she has! What spirit!"

"She has what we call 'temperament,'" Fax explained. "This means that she's one of those people who only have to be natural to advertise themselves."

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"I see—I see! One must know people well to guess such clever things about them."

"I did not meet her until to-night. It wasn't until she took her wig off that I suspected—" Fax broke off, with a confusion so instant that his whole face mimicked the turkey-wattles red of his ears. "She's going to have a fountain here," he concluded, his voice suddenly businesslike.

"Oh!" Kerry breathed. "That's all the garden needs—a fountain."

And then interruption came. The Golden Serpent, soft brief curls whirling, came down the steps from the house. She snatched Kerry's shawl from her shoulders and flew with it, spritelike, about the garden. This time, she held it above her head, lengthwise. It scrolled upward. The thin old fringe turned to a thin green flame. She danced, manipulating it like a banner. The two men, following her, resumed their seats.

"Cendrillon," the Golden Serpent boasted, pausing breathless at Kerry's side, "I've won the greatest battle I ever fought in my life. And, believe me, I have fought some battles. But I've won. I've conquered the redoubtable Joshua. Josh, I crown you king of men." She swept up the rejected wig from the table and placed it on Joshua's head. Too small, of course, it perched on his red curls like some grotesque black-luster ornament, making caricature of the brick-tinted, Irish contours beneath. "And you, Jay, I crown you king of poets." She tore recklessly at the orchids, tied a slender tail of them about his brow.

JOSHUA smoked impassively on, his gaze, like his thoughts, obviously elsewhere. Jay blushed and cast his eyes downward. The Golden Serpent laughed impishly. But suddenly her attention veered.

"Cendrillon, what can I give *you?* You've brought me luck. You don't know how happy you've made me to-night."

"I'm glad," Kerry said simply. And then they both started—Fax as though a shell had exploded; the rest a little as though they, too, had been to a war. For above—but so close that, at its impulsion, the air bit through their bodies—the church clock announced midnight. They all laughed a little. But Kerry rose.

"You're not going, Cendrillon?" her godmother protested. "Why, I'm just getting into the spirit of the party!"

"It's a convention with Cendrillons to vanish at twelve o'clock," Kerry reminded her.

"All right. But listen! I'll tell you what I'll do with you: I'll give you a dinner. A week from to-night. Something—I can't tell you what—compels me to vanish from New York for a while. I can come back once, for one night, just a week from to-night. Will you come to my dinner, Cendrillon?"

"Oh, I *will* come!"

"What time would you like that dinner, Cendrillon? For my sake, put it late. I like things late."

"Ten o'clock?" Kerry questioned tentatively.

"Ten o'clock it shall be. Good-night, then!" The Golden Serpent kissed her. "One thing," she added: "Are you good at keeping secrets? It is very important that you tell nobody about all this, Cendrillon. Nobody must know that I am here."

"I am very good at keeping secrets," Kerry assured her. "I have a little closet in my own mind where I shut them up. And I always remember not to open the door."

Kerry returned the "Good-nights" of Jay and Joshua; but Fax rose and conducted her out of the garden, through the garden gate to the back door of Mrs. Lane's house.

"May I come to see you, Cendrillon?" he asked.

"No," Kerry answered; "I have just this day come to live with my aunt. She doesn't know I am in this garden at this moment, and, you see, I can't tell her. I should have great difficulty in explaining you. After a while, perhaps— You will be at the dinner?"

"You betchyeh!" But although Fax's accent was fervent, he seemed, in another instant, to meditate. "I shall be very busy the next week. You see, they've put me on the Darnston case."

"Put you on? I don't understand. Who are 'they'?"

"My paper. The *Sphere.* I was a reporter before I went overseas, and I've gone back to the old job. I'll be hot on that girl's trail for the next week."

"Why do they want to find her," Kerry inquired, "if everybody's so sure that she'll return on her birthday, and it's only two or three weeks off?"

"Well, for one thing, there's that matter

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of the fifty thousand dollars' reward. But with the press it's a matter of pride. I'd like powerfully to bring Diana Darnston into camp. It would be breaking all records. However, the story in itself is a marvel. I am keen to get to work on it. But listen, Cendrillon; I can't see you, you say? May I write to you?"

"Oh, no. I couldn't explain your letters—really."

"How can I get them to you? Wait! I'll tell you. With many simoleons I'll bribe Wong—that's the Chinese man—to slip a letter under the garden gate every night. Will you come down and get it?" Pause. "Will you?"

Pause. Then, in Kerry's softest breath,

"Yes."

"Will you answer them?"

Pause. Then, in Kerry's most decided accent,

"No."

"All right. Listen, Cendrillon——"

"No; don't go yet! Wait a moment! *Wait*, I say. Just one more thing: It is true, as you say, that Cendrillons always vanish at midnight. But sometimes they leave a slipper behind. Can't I have one of those golden slippers, so that, when I wake up to-morrow, I'll know I didn't dream you?"

"Why—why—I—I—they were my mother's!"

Another pause.

"Please!" It was Fax's voice.

Then came in the darkness a swish of drapery. Something passed from a little smooth hand to a hard, muscular one. As Kerry ascended the stairs to her room, one foot made a firm step on the carpet. But the other sank softly into its nap.

WHEN Mrs. Lane came into her niece's bedroom the next morning, she found Kerry up and moving about a semidarkened room, her newly washed cheeks gleaming freshly, her eyes, each of them, holding a muted star. Kerry's bed still held the new position close to the oriel; it was all made up. Kerry had pinned her mother's shawl over the window. The light was a tender under-sea green.

"Have you a headache, dear?" her aunt asked anxiously.

"No; I never felt better." And, as though to prove her statement, Kerry confronted her aunt with eyes in which single stars seemed suddenly to burst into whole constellations. "But, although it's cool enough nights here, I thought I could keep it cooler during the day by screening the window. Isn't this light soft?" she added, as if suddenly remembering something. "I'm going to take *all* the care of my room, Aunty K. I don't want anybody to come into it but you and me."

However, the instant her aunt was gone Kerry darted to the window and looked down again on the secret garden.

Yes; it was there! She had not dreamed last night. There was the great gold-and-blue rug, the bay trees, the blue-and-gold unbrellas, the hammock, the table. Her godmother and Joshua and Jay—and—yes; Fax must be real.

She said nothing of her last night's experiences to anybody in the house—not even to her aunt. After breakfast she opened her typewriter and went busily to work. She occupied herself the whole morning. Then lunch came, with the denuded luncheon-table and more talk about the Darnston case. The afternoon broke itself into talks with her aunt, a little more practise on her typewriter, a nap. Then it was dinner-time and a full table, more and more talk about the Darnston case, finally, bed——

A dull program it sounds just retailing it. Certainly it held nothing to account for Kerry's accelerating excitement. For it must have been excitement that made the stars in her eyes flare like blown fires, that brought a brilliant fever to her cheeks, a perpetual crimson ferment to her lips. However, outwardly she was quite serene. From nine o'clock on, her door locked against interruption, she sat at the window, her chin in her hands—waiting. After a long, long, *long* time, a band of light slashed the dark wall. Then came the hesitant trip down the first flight of stairs, the noiseless crawl over the second flight, the silent creep down the third, the opening of the rusty door, the frightened tiptoeing dash into the alley—and—then——

Alone in her room, her fingers, suddenly unadroit, pulled open a big square envelope. The letter began, "Cendrillon, my love——"

The next night there was a second letter, and the next night a third, and the next night a fourth.

In the mean time Kerry was getting

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"He wraps a big rug about her and throws her over his shoulder. He carries her down-stairs."

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acquainted with the people in the boarding-house, and they were getting acquainted with her. She liked them all because they all interested her. But, in the very nature of things, it was the women—and especially the three idle ones—Mrs. Newhall, Mrs. Deane and Miss Ryan—with whom she became most intimate.

The boarders, in their turn, liked her. They liked her primarily—human nature being what it is—because obviously they interested her. From the point of view of the men she must have seemed at first the unassertive little-mouse type, from that of the women the harmless, unrivaling kind, and to both sexes the understanding sort which invites confidence and confidences. She listened with a strange intentness to everything they said to her. Listened—it was more an absorption. She drank conversation down.

In the matter of looks—although she was as unconscious of this as the wren of the rivalry of the nightingale or of the bird of paradise—she had to endure constant comparison with Mrs. Deane and Miss Ryan. Both these women possessed beauty—beauty definite, established, perfected—beauty of an instantly explosive quality. Miss Ryan's personality surged with a sparkling vivacity; Mrs. Deane's held a somber shade of tragedy. These two had, moreover, an extra charm. Kerry held an expected and definitely understood place in the household. As Mrs. Lane's niece, her coming had been prepared for. Mrs. Lane had put all the boarders in possession of the simple facts of her up-state history; they had even seen her pictures. But of Miss Ryan and Mrs. Deane they knew little. And they came to know nothing more, for these girls divulged nothing. Indeed, gradually there grew up about them a delicious aura of mystery.

The Darnston case continued to be the main topic of conversation.

The second day of the story there appeared in the press a plan of the Guirk house, a description of the neighborhood, careful biographies of members of both the Guirk and Darnston families, a list of people who had called at the Guirk house on the day that Diana Darnston disappeared. They were the milkman, the newsboy, the postman, and, later, a pair of employees from Smyrniande's on Fifth Avenue—the dealer from whom Mrs. Guirk had brought her fine collection of Turkish rugs.

From all accounts, the first three visitors had no importance in the case. Of the other two, one, named Coney, was only the driver of one of Smyrniande's delivery auto trucks. The other, Simpson, was a sales-clerk who had been in Smyrniande's employ for twenty years. Simpson, at Mrs. Guirk's request—this was her custom when she contemplated a purchase—brought a truckload of rugs to the old house in the Eighties. The big room on the upper story, which had been in succession nursery, playroom, gymnasium, was being turned, because of its exceptional view over the river, into an up-stairs living-room. It was to cover its large floor-space that Mrs. Guirk was purchasing more rugs.

Simpson, assisted by Coney, had spread the rugs, one after another, on the floor. Diana Darnston, the heroine of the mysterious vanishing, had stood by, apparently as interested as her aunt in the proceedings. After an hour—it must then have been half-past ten—she complained that she was tired and retired to her room on the floor below. A little before eleven, Simpson, with whom Mrs. Guirk had nearly twenty years of business acquaintance, left, accompanied by his assistant. Mrs. Guirk saw them to the head of the stairs before returning to inspect her purchases. When the luncheon-bell sounded, she knocked at Diana's door on her way down-stairs. There was no answer, and after an interval she opened the door. The room was empty. The Guirks searched the house thoroughly, discovered the lock of hair, and then immediately called the police. The rest was already history.

BY THE third day the papers were flooded with the details of Diana Darnston's life. There were biographical accounts—with pictures—of every one who had been associated with the twins from the Guirks down through the tutor and the governess who had instructed their childhood to the meager list of all the servants the Guirks had ever employed. On a few points they all agreed. Dana had been a quick, lively boy. Diana had been a quiet, gentle girl. The Guirks took the greatest possible care of the twins. After Dana's death, Diana, brooding on her brother's

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untimely end, had become so melancholy that they had all kept watch on her.

The Guirks were the sole executors of the Darnston will, the sole guardians of the children. Guirk, it appeared, managed the estate himself, assisted by Johnson, McCune & Johnson, his lawyers, who maintained a heavy legal silence to all interviewers. On the third day it came out that the children had an aunt, Hannah Dana—Mrs. Darnston's sister—living in the Orient, and that the Guirks did not know her present address. The Guirks, it was hinted, had had a misunderstanding with her when the twins were young, and the thing had never been patched up.

"I NEVER heard of such an unfortunate woman as that Mrs. Guirk," Mrs. Newhall commented acidly. "Her sister-in-law's relations get mad with her; her nephew gets drowned; her niece gets kidnaped or murdered, or runs away or something."

"It does look as if there was a jinx on the old girl," Joe Nickel admitted.

"Tell me all about this sister, Mr. Udell," Miss Darling implored. "I haven't had a chance to read the papers to-night, and I'm nearly exploding with curiosity. Really, I never in all my life was so thrilled by any newspaper mystery. I ought not to let myself get so carried away. I assure you, though, I dream of it nights."

"Well, it seems," Udell proceeded, "when Anstress was a girl——"

"Anstress?" Mrs. Newhall exclaimed. "Who's Anstress?"

"Mrs. Guirk," Udell answered.

"Anstress! I never heard tell of such a name," Mrs. Newhall persisted.

"Old New England monniker," Udell threw in languidly.

"It is not a common name, but I have heard it," Mr. Murray informed them.

"Well, it seems that his Money-bags—old Darnston, father of the twins—married a woman by the name of Dana—Rebecca Dana. Rebecca had a younger sister, Hannah. About fifteen years ago, after Darnston's death, Hannah quarrels with the Guirks in regard to some money matters. Then Hannah, who seems to be a queer bird, has some sort of a breakdown and beats it to the Orient for rest and change. Then she just naturally disappeared; at least, nobody's heard from her since."

"That's where the girl is!" Mrs. Deane put in. "In the Orient with Aunt Hannah."

"Wait a moment!" Udell ordered good-naturedly. "Hold your horses! In the first place, Diana's never had any communication with Hannah—nor Dana, nor any of them."

"How do you know that?" Delight Ryan asked, in the extreme of skepticism.

"Well, how could she? This Diana person was guarded to the very limit. You'd have thought she was Mabel Hohenzollern or Gertie Hapsburg or Lizzie Romanoff—or something. She never received a letter, and she never sent a letter that the Guirks didn't see. She never went to school. She was never permitted to walk on the street alone."

"Well, I don't get it yet," Miss Darling remonstrated, "why she was so guarded."

"I thought I told you," Udell explained patiently, "that it was Anstress's wheel that somebody might kidnap her for her money. She worried all the time about this, and especially after the boy was drowned."

"Well, I must say it's *mighty* peculiar!" Mrs. Newhall put in.

"So do many," Udell reassured her.

"What sort of a house is it?" Mrs. Deane inquired.

"Oh, just what the papers say—very elegant. A beautiful home—a beautiful home."

"When does she come of age?" Joe Nickel asked.

"In three weeks or so—June twenty-first."

"Safely married," Joe Nickel prophesied. "Holding out her little paw for the twenty millions."

"What do the police think of this?" asked Mr. Murray.

"Well," promptly answered the omniscient Mr. Udell, "when a girl disappears, you know, the first police theory is always that it's a love-affair—gone off to meet her man or something. But nobody has dug up anything to show that Diana Darnston ever looked at a man—not even a flirtation. That's out. The second is kidnaping. The Police Department favors that. The district-attorney's office favors suicide—they're going into all the sales of poison—only, if she took that route, where's the body? Their best idea is she's drowned herself."

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"The queer thing about it all," Kerry interposed, "is that I can't seem to get any clear idea of this girl. What kind of person was she?"

"Well it *is* baffling," replied the source of information. "There doesn't seem to be anything special about her. She was sort of dopy, as I get it—dull—not much pep to her. Read all the time. And moped a good deal, I think."

"In short, as stupid as anybody who will have twenty millions is bound to be," Miss Darling insisted scornfully. It appeared in all these conversations that Miss Darling had that contempt for the intellectual capacity of the merely moneyed which is the chief solace of the unmoneyed.

Notwithstanding all this excitement, the week that elapsed between Kerry's first visit to the garden and the night of the future dinner went by on wings, if on wings at all, which seemed to drag leaden weights. If it had not been for those nightly letters, getting thicker and thicker with every Wong mail, Kerry would have believed that Time, unjustly prejuduced against her, was standing still, his feet securely caught on one second—and that second the second when she left the garden.

BUT through all those unending days currents were crossing and cross-currents were crisscrossing each other in their boarding-house life. One morning, on her way up-stairs, Mrs. Newhall opened her door and called Kerry into her room. Mrs. Newhall never descended to the breakfast-table. Annie brought her a late breakfast on her tray, and she consumed it comfortably in bed. When Kerry entered, Mrs. Newhall had risen. Attired in a loose negligee of a thin purplish silk, profusely trimmed with lace, she was just manicuring her nails.

"Do sit down, my dear," she invited, her voice almost sunk to a whisper. "I want to have a talk with you on a very important matter—a very important matter. I have been waiting for a long time for this opportunity, but I thought I would make sure that everybody had left for work except you and your aunt. Annie tells me the house is quite empty this morning; even Mrs. Deane and Miss Ryan have gone shopping. Those two are always in the house. It seems to me such a curious thing that they never seem to want to go out. But it was not to say this that I called you in here, Miss Lane. It was a much more important matter—and a very delicate matter. But before I begin I want you to promise me you will treat what I am going to say as a confidence."

Kerry gave the required assurance. She sat looking curiously at Mrs. Newhall, wondering.

"My dear, it's in regard to the Darnston case. I think I have a clue. But I thought I'd like to talk it over with somebody whom I could trust before I made up my mind what to do. Did you notice, the other night, when Mr. Udell was describing Diana Darnston, that he happened to look straight at Mrs. Deane? It was almost as if he were describing her. Don't you see how perfectly she fits all the accounts in the paper? Little and dark—olive skin—gray eyes?"

"Yes, she does," Kerry agreed, "although I have never thought of it before. But," she went on very simply, though a little pleadingly, "don't you think, dear Mrs. Newhall, with the offer of fifty thousand dollars reward, that all over New York wherever people meet a little dark girl with gray eyes they will wonder if she isn't Diana Darnston? In fact, the papers all say that the Guirks have been overrun with people wiring or telephoning to give clues that always prove false, that their mail is full of snap-shots of strange girls sent by people who are sure they have found Diana Darnston."

"Yes; that's true enough," Mrs. Newhall agreed. "But there's another thing: Don't you remember the papers all spoke of a plain, chased gold ring that Diana Darnston was wearing? Well, Mrs. Deane was wearing a plain, chased gold ring that night—don't you remember?"

"I'm afraid I don't," Kerry confessed.

"Well, she did."

"But hundreds of people in New York," Kerry began feebly; "thousands," she added, with increasing conviction; "millions"—she came to a reckless climax—"must be wearing plain, chased gold rings."

"But," Mrs. Newhall concluded triumphantly, "Mrs. Deane hasn't worn her ring since that night. I've looked for it every meal."

"Perhaps she didn't really love Mr.

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Deane," Kerry theorized weakly, "and doesn't want to wear his ring any more."

"Nonsense, my child! But that's not all." Mrs. Newhall's voice sank to a whisper again. "My dear, be sure you never mention this. Why I tell you, I don't know. But something happened the other day—a very suspicious thing. I was going up the stairs to your floor to return a book to Miss Ryan. I had my bedroom slippers on. They're made of felt, and I suppose my feet made no sound. It happened that you and your aunt were down-stairs in the dining-room, and Miss Ryan, as I afterward discovered, was out. There was nobody on your floor but Mrs. Deane. Her door was ajar—just a little. Coming up-stairs, just as my head raised above the level of the hall floor, some sound caused me to turn toward her room. Her door was open a crack. I looked straight into it, straight under the bed in the direction of the window. Mrs. Deane had dropped something. She was on the floor—on her hands and knees—searching. And, my dear—" Mrs. Newhall paused impressively. Her voice deepened and lowered by another shade. "My dear, she had short hair. It seems that all that hair she wears is false. Her own hair is short and dark and with a little curl in it—very pretty. Don't you remember that Mr. Udell told us that Diana Darnston cut her hair off before she ran away?"

"But, Mrs. Newhall," Kerry said, "if it was Miss Darnston's idea to disguise herself by cutting off her hair, what would be her object in wearing a wig?"

Mrs. Newhall cocked her eye in the direction of the trilling canary and meditated a moment.

"Well, of course," she began slowly, "when you put it to me that way, it *does* seem a foolish thing to do. But, on the other hand, what possible object can Mrs. Deane haye in disguising herself?"

"Of course I don't know that," Kerry answered, "and of course I can't guess. And, besides, I don't see what business it is of ours."

Mrs. Newhall took another tack.

"She's a very unhappy girl, don't you think?"

"Yes; I think she is," Kerry agreed. "But as to the matter of the wig and the short hair, you know yourself what a craze there is for short hair. Perhaps Mrs. Deane wants her hair to be long again, and wears false hair in the mean time."

Mrs. Newhall did not look convinced.

"However, I will tell you what decision I came to," she said, after a meditative moment or two. "I made up my mind that I'd do nothing about it. Heavens knows I need that fifty-thousand-dollar reward as much as anybody. No; I don't mean that. I don't *need* it as much as some, but I *want* it as much as anybody. But I said to myself: 'Nettie Niles, that poor girl is in trouble of some kind. If she isn't Diana Darnston, she's run off from something else. She doesn't want people to know she's here. Don't you be the one to make it harder for her.' But I did feel as though I wanted to talk it over with somebody. I beg you, my dear, not to breathe a word of this to anybody. It might get us into trouble. But that's not the worst of it. It might get that sweet young thing—a widow, too—into a worse trouble."

Kerry delivered this second promise even more easily than the first.

MRS. DEANE was a very unhappy woman—to Kerry's sensitive perception that was as plain as though printed on her forehead. Yes; she was sad, tragically sad, and Mrs. Newhall was right—she was a little mysterious. She made no allusions to her own circumstances after a first simple statement that she was waiting in New York to meet relatives who were going to take her immediately to Europe. That she was waiting there could be no doubt. She waited with every fiber of her being and in every instant of her day. This was the more noticeable in that she had apparently no talent for killing time. And then she seemed to dread going out. She stayed indoors constantly; in fact, except for an occasional early, heavily veiled morning invasion of the shopping district, and a late, also heavily veiled walk in the direction of the river, she never left the house. The fruit of that shopping expedition was mainly books. Her mantel was gradually accumulating a pile of paper-covered novels. Apparently every day she raced through one and sometimes two. She read far into the night.

Early in the morning after her evening in the secret garden, Kerry had arranged

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and dusted her room. The window-seat was piled with cushions. As Kerry started to shake them, her eyes caught on what stiffened her to a kind of paralysis. It was a hairpin. Unusually long, unusually slender, Kerry had never seen another like it except— The big structure of hair which massed on Mrs. Deane's head was pegged down by just such hairpins!

Mrs. Deane must have entered the room while she was gone. If she had knocked and there was no response, perhaps she had justified herself in opening the door as an extra effort to make sure that Kerry was not there. The next inevitable action was, of course, to close the door and withdraw. But apparently Mrs. Deane had not done that. Perhaps attracted by the sound of voices, she had walked over to the window. But this hairpin was resting in a hollow of one of the pillows—a hollow, round and deep, as though a head, careful not to appear above the rim of the window-sill, had lain there for a long time.

THE dinner at the end of the week was coming nearer—and nearer—and nearer. And every night the letters, thrust by the faithful Wong under the garden gate, were growing longer—and longer—and longer. And every moment Kerry's eyes were glowing happier—and happier—and happier..

Before she stole down-stairs, Kerry pulled her mother's shawl away from the window and peered down into the secret garden. 'Prospero had waved his magic wand again. Still blue and gold, picked with rainbow colors, glittering with mirrors and slashed with black—everything was as it had been the night of her first magic visit. Now, though, her trained senses caught the smell of flowers, the tinkle of falling water. And the big, shining-topped ebony table was set for dinner—five places. It laid a final emphasis on the colorfulness of the scene. Rounds of white china splashed with scarlet and yellow and orange and blue and green; files of silver, slim and glittering; lines of glasses, their bowls flaring like iridescent flower-cups at the end of long stems—from Kerry's oriel they seemed to radiate, a five-pointed star, about the table-center. Fax, lying in the hammock, his hands clasped at the back of his neck, fixed a steady eye on Kerry's oriel. As the window turned suddenly into a frame for her dusky head, he waved his hand and leaped to his feet.

Kerry stole down the stairs with all her former care redoubled. In a few seconds the still air was touching her cheeks with fingers cooled in dew.

Other fingers seized hers. But they had a human warmth—firmness. They seemed to take possession of her whole being.

"I didn't dream you, did I?" Fax said. "I was sure I had, and yet I kept insisting to myself that I hadn't. Perhaps this is a part of the dream, but—oh, boy—if it is, it's some dream! And you're in gray tonight—I like gray. You're like a wonderful little velvet-plumaged gray bird. I like women to wear soft colors—faint gray and faded rose and foggy blue." He paused. "Is this a dream?"

He drew her into the garden and over to the hammock. He seated her at one end, massing the cushions back of her with a touch as deft as that of a nurse. Then he sank into the cushions at the other end, stopped the gentle oscillation of the hammock with a stern foot set firmly on the ground.

"Did you ever get my letters?" he asked presently.

"I hope so," Kerry answered. "One came every night."

"That's the correct number," Fax assured her. "Has it ever occurred to you, young woman, how many answers you owe me?"

"Yes. I'll repay them all some day," Kerry promised.

"With interest," Fax demanded, "simple and compound?"

But here came the commotion—a rustle of silky fabrics, a tapping of tiny heels, a scented air—which could but presage one thing—the entrance of Kerry's godmother. The Golden Serpent darted out of the house. Back of her, at his normal, melancholy pace, came Jay. Joshua, his long legs making little of the journey, strolled in the rear.

"Cendrillon," the Golden Serpent called at sight of Kerry, "I *am* glad to see you! I can't catalogue for you all the luck you brought me a week ago when we met. Bundles, boxes, bushels, barrels! Everything has gone right and the way I want it. I'm so happy! And in"—she cast her eyes to the moon and appeared to take counsel with it—"just two weeks you will know all about it. But I can't tell you now."

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"I am glad," Kerry said, with all her accustomed simple graveness.

The Golden Serpent turned to her.

"You have told nobody about me?"

"Nobody, godmother."

"Nobody but you has looked through your window?"

"Nobody, godmother."

"Are you absolutely sure?"

Kerry's lips apparently opened to form the word "sure." And then the memory flashed across her of the hairpin she had found among the cushions. A sense of trouble poured upon her. And yet some generous instinct warned her to keep silent in regard to Mrs. Deane.

"Not anybody that I know of," she amended. "Certainly not since I was here; for I take care of my own room, and when I was not in I locked the door."

"After two weeks," the Golden Serpent repeated buoyantly, "I shall not mind. And then—I'll tell the world!"

"Two weeks!" Fax repeated. "Those are going to be two busy weeks in my young life, and two weeks from to-day is going to be an important day in all our lives. It's Diana Darnston's birthday!"

"The date," Joshua put in, "that she appears in the lawyer's office with her new husband and a demand for the twenty million."

"Well, of course that's what everybody thinks," Fax admitted. "I've been on the Darnston case for a week now, and I'm not so sure myself."

"What's your dope?" Joshua asked.

"Nothing," Fax admitted. "I'm no nearer a solution of the darned thing than I was the day the story broke. It certainly is one fine young mystery. But sometimes, even when you've found nothing definite, you get a sense of things. And, somehow, I can't believe that this is just a case of a girl running away to get married."

"All right," Joshua persisted. "We'll see."

"Oh, let's cut out the Diana Darnston case!" the Golden Serpent put in pettishly. "It bores me. And nobody has said a word about my new gown."

"It's only because it's such a knock-out that we're still gasping for breath," Fax assured her.

The gown was as great a contrast to the golden umbrella-case, which she had worn the first time Kerry saw her, as gown could possibly be. It was of tulle, the palest fog—no—mist-blue, of a quality as sheerly light and floating as possible. Here and there sprays of beads of a delicate silveriness made it look like a cloud on which the moon is shining. The neck and much of the back were bare; but wide, drifting films of tulle, which hung from the shoulders, tried at times to obscure these expanses of olive flesh. The short skirt was held out by a pair of concentric hoops. Kerry's godmother looked as though she was suspended in a tulle-hung bird-cage. She wore her high wig no longer; her short dark hair dropped in soft curls against her white neck. Her eyes seemed immense—great pools of velvet blackness, through which ran a golden stream. Her silver-shod feet made infinitesimal flashes on the soft rug.

DINNER was over.

The men had pushed away from the table and were smoking comfortably. They were talking, and again they were considering the Darnston case. And, as before, Kerry was listening—absorbing, rather. At times her eyes would sweep the table. And then, always, wonder starred them, as though she were thinking that what she saw could not possibly exist.

Presently Wong materialized noiselessly in the doorway, advanced with his tray, began to dismantle the table.

The Golden Serpent, with a long sigh, pulled herself out of the hammock, to which she had retired.

"Ah, well—more work to be done!" she exclaimed discontentedly. "Always more work to be done! I have had one little interval of paradise, of rest from spying eyes—" She broke off abruptly. "I suppose that's all I can expect. Come on, bully boys," she continued in an instant; "I still have an hour's work in me. And at this moment I *can* give it. Five minutes more, however, and I shall be lost. Come, my hearties! Make hay before the rain comes. Gather ye rosebuds before the rose-worm appears."

She drew herself upright. And then, with one of her impulses of lightning energy, she leaped to her feet and ran, full speed, into the house. Her mist-blue wings pulled filmy trails through the air. Her silver feet made glittering streaks on the grass. Jay and Joshua followed her at a quiet gait.

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The silence which opened their first *tête-à-tête* did not, in the case of Kerry and Fax, manifest itself at their second one. This time it was Kerry who broke it, and she broke it in an excited voice immediately they were alone.

"OH, TELL me about the Darnston case!" she begged, her eager eyes wide as a child's. Fax smiled. "You said such unsatisfactory things about it in your letters," Kerry reproached him.

"I had something better to write about in my letters," Fax reminded her. "But of course you are interested—everybody is. And I am going to tell you all about it. But—" He paused and appeared to change what might have been warning to simple statement. "This is something I have told nobody. You understand—*nobody!* I am going to give you just the impression that I've got—all the things, in short, that I can't possibly write—even for the *Sphere*."

Kerry gave a little jerk of excitement strong enough to flop her chair up and down. Fax laughed.

"All right; I'll start at once. First of all, I don't get the impression of the Guirks that every reporter got. They're a pair of vultures. They're the most evil birds of prey I ever laid my eyes on. They're unclean. They're horrible. That old woman has a mouth full of little black shark's teeth and a jaw that drops hideously away, without any chin, into a great, flabby, unctuous throatful of fat. She has an eye that makes me shudder. It's as dead as the eye of a boiled fish. That's Anstress."

Fax paused momentarily to go through the motions of lighting a pipe.

"As for James—well, James has all the avarice and covetousness and acquisitiveness in the world concentrated and raised to the *n*th power. He is cold, cruel, grasping, calculating. He hasn't a red corpuscle in his body or a kindly impulse in his soul. In contrast with that awful oily fatness of his wife, he's as thin and dried as a bleached bone, and as white and hard."

"But I—" Kerry began; "I—I hardly know how to frame this—I don't like to say it," she tried to take it up. "Of what are you accusing those two old people?" she ended suddenly, throwing diplomacy to the winds.

"I am accusing them," Fax said gravely, "of making away with their niece."

"But how—when?"

"I don't know how or when or where," Fax stated, with a simplicity as great as Kerry's own. "But the river is on the other side of the garden wall. The boy died that way——"

"Why don't other people suspect this?"

"Perhaps they do."

"Why don't they say it, then?"

"In the first place, it's libelous, and, of course, no paper would print it. But when you come to look at the whole affair closely, why should they *think* it? Remember, with me it's only an impression, an intuition—I've told you how I leap to things nowadays. Then consider the reputation those Guirks have built up. Remember that they have never missed going to meeting, as they would say, any Sunday of their life. Remember Guirk's one of the pillars of their church. They half support it. Remember that they are supposed to give annually to charities what seems like a young fortune."

"Surely," Kerry interrupted, "you will admit that they have taken the best possible care of those children?"

Fax interrupted himself to take a long puff at his pipe.

"Care! Yes; if you say it quick." He paused reflectively. "That fortune," he remarked finally; "it will bear looking into. I think I'm going after that when I get the more immediate stuff off my hands. The solution may lie there. The Guirks—which means James—are sole trustees. Where is the accumulation? James Guirk knows. Suppose he has been feathering his own nest. The twins come of age and demand an accounting. He has hitherto been able to escape polite inquiries into his private affairs through the power of what may be one of the great American fortunes. But now—the shoe goes on the other foot. The Darnston twins have that power. His alternative is jail if the twins ever reach twenty-one alive, and an enormous fortune if they don't. This may be speculation, but there are the facts. Now, go back to the care they've shown in bringing up the twins. Looked at from another point of view, that care turns into a different motive. They appeared to take great care of them because they needed an excuse for keeping them sequestered, and they wanted to keep

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them completely sequestered so that when the time came——"

Kerry's mind broke from the leading-strings in which Fax was drawing it, leaped a stage ahead or two.

"You mean they actually threw the boy—Dana—into the river?"

"No; not exactly that," Fax answered. "My idea is that they let him drown himself."

Kerry's brows twisted.

"I don't understand——"

"Listen to me," Fax ordered tolerantly; "I'm going to tell you the story just as I see it. Then you can tell me what you think of it. I'll start at the beginning—in the year 1898, to be accurate. Once upon a time twin children were born to a pair of people called Darnston who—at the time—lived during the winter in New York and during the summer in a little New England village called Field Harbor, in which they had been brought up. Mr. Darnston seems to have been a typical Yankee, long, thin, blue-eyed and sandy-haired, but able as the deuce—a kind of genius in his way. Mrs. Darnston, who was a Miss Dana, was twenty years younger than he. She died when the twins were born. She was a lovely thing. Anstress showed me a flock of pictures—a delicious, little, softly-rounded dark girl—with gray eyes, Anstress said. Admeh Darnston had early in life made a fortune—a big fortune—in the West. He was a lumber king. He died when he was not yet fifty, leaving these twin children six years old—Diana and Dana. By the way, I wonder why he called her 'Diana.' My feeling is that it was a revulsion against a family of Bible names—Anstress, Admeh. Even his wife's name was Rebecca and her sister's name Hannah. I don't understand his choice. I like those sturdy old Bible names myself."

"I DON'T," Kerry laughed; "and you wouldn't if you were I. I was named after my aunt. My aunt and I are the most unfortunate of women. What do you suppose they named us? Kerrenhappuch."

Fax whistled.

"You *were* stung!"

"I call her 'K' and she calls me 'Kerry.'"

"Kerry's pretty," Fax commented. "I suppose I shall call you that—when I don't call you 'Cendrillon.'" Then he went on with his story. "Admeh Darnston had an older sister, Anstress, who married James Guirk. His wife, Rebecca Dana, had a sister, Hannah Dana, who never married. When Admeh Darnston died he left Anstress and James five millions each. He left each of the children twenty millions—not a penny of which they could touch until they were twenty-one. The Guirks were made executors, guardians of the twins, trustees, everything. The provision was that, if either of the twins died before reaching that age, his fortune went to the other; if both died, all the money was to go to Anstress. And he commended the twins to Anstress's care. So Anstress brought them up. The first thing she did after getting control of the children was to move from Field Harbor, where they were brought up, to New York. They went into the old Darnston house—a big brownstone barn of a place, flush up against the East River.

"It's a terrible place, although the situation is beautiful. The side windows open out on the river; front and back windows show glimpses of it. But every window is so grilled with ironwork and then so screened and doubly screened, first with heavy écru-lace curtains and then with voluminous plush draperies, that it's like living in perpetual night. The furniture is massive and cumbersome—bleak old mahogany or stark black walnut. It is filled with pictures that are mostly steel engravings and gloomy old bronzes, cold, sepulchral alabasters, mortuary marbles——"

"I think I can see it," Kerry interrupted.

"It has, however, a big yard and a great flat roof, and these were the salvation of the twins. They were virtually brought up in that yard and on that roof."

"The papers say Anstress was so afraid something would happen to Dana," Kerry threw in, "that she would not even allow him to learn to swim."

"Part of her scheme. She had a reason for that," Fax assured her, "as you will presently understand. Also, she wouldn't allow him a camera. Nobody knows it but me."

"And how did you find it out?" Kerry queried. "I beg your pardon if I am asking questions that I shouldn't."

"On the contrary, ask all you want. I found out about the camera in this way: A few years ago a family by the name of

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Mangan moved into the house next door. The oldest child, Lawrence, was a boy of about Dana's age. The two boys carried on a surreptitious friendship until Anstress discovered it and stopped it. It seems she always broke up any friendships with other children. Two or three ears ago the Mangan family moved away. It occurred to me to look them up.

"I talked with the boy. He happened to mention that Dana borrowed his camera one day and took some pictures of Diana. Young Mangan got them developed for him. You can imagine how I felt at the prospect of digging up a picture of that girl when nobody else has been able to find one. But when I inquired further—being very careful not to seem too eager—I found that Mangan hadn't any of these pictures. Dana kept the films. Anstress doesn't know this. She's positive that the children never had their pictures taken, and I, for one, think she believes it. I didn't undeceive her. Moreover, young Mangan himself says Dana told him that, except a boat and an automobile, a camera was the only thing that he was not permitted to have."

"I can understand about the boat and the automobile." Kerry's voice was a mere thread of meditative perplexity. "But the camera——"

"That's easy to explain," Fax said. "Photographs lead to publicity. The whole Guirk game was to let as few people as possible know even of the existence of the Darnston twins." He stopped and puffed with a kind of explosive excitement at his pipe. "Deuce take it! It's the most maddening case I've ever encountered; for I can't rid myself of a conviction—it strikes me every time I talk with the Guirks—that they are really sincere in wanting to get Diana back. I feel that they're as much puzzled by her disappearance as I." He sighed in a balked manner.

Kerry sighed, too.

"I don't believe any of it," she admitted, frankly. "It doesn't convince me."

"Well, sometimes I don't convince myself," Fax admitted, with equal candor. "But now let's go on with the human side of it. Let's admit for a moment that the Guirks want the forty million dollars and want it enough to commit murder to get it. Take the boy. They decide to put him out of the way, because he *is* a boy and because it will be easier to get rid of the girl with him gone. He always has been crazy to go on the river, but they won't let him get into a boat. He's always been crazy to drive an automobile, but they won't let him get into a machine. He's always been crazy to swim, but they won't let him go near the water. They won't even permit him to take swimming-lessons. They themselves go out rowing on the river every pleasant evening in the spring and fall. There's always a boat tied up close to the river wall. Take a high-spirited boy, sick to death of this chaperonage. He'd sure steal out some night and take a row by himself."

"But how would he get out," Kerry demanded, "with the watch they kept on him?"

"I don't know. But boys always do get out." Fax smiled his perturbing smile. "I always did. Even girls do sometimes, you know."

"Yes," Kerry admitted; "I always did."

THEY laughed a little at their mutual vagabondage.

"So, on one of these secret expeditions, the boy drowns. Understand me, my theory is that they didn't kill him—they just let him kill himself. So that's the end of Dana. Now, take the case of the girl. The boy's interesting—but he's dead. At least, that's everybody's conviction but mine. So let's consider him dead. And now the girl. I don't get her entirely—I'm baffled by a sense of mystery. I am speaking of her personality. Still, with what I've got, I've tried to reconstruct her."

"Tell me," Kerry begged, with another one of her childlike bounces.

Fax smiled into her excited eyes.

"Oh, how you tempt me to talk of—other things!" He sighed, and then, as though with an effort, he went on: "I seem to get Dana easily enough—a high-spirited, self-willed lad whom James and Anstress found very difficult to rule. But when it comes to Diana—well, Diana was quite a different person."

"How can you say that?" Kerry demanded. "None of the papers seem to know anything about her?"

"I know they don't. But I do. Or, at least, I think I do. She was studious and read a great deal. They speak of her as

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moping about the house and let it go at that. But sometimes when you've thought a great deal about somebody you've never met, you get to feel that you know him. Now, I *know* Diana Darnston. I almost see her there. In the first place, I'm sure she is beautiful——"

KERRY unlocked a peal of laughter. It was so spontaneous—that laughter—yet so incongruous, issuing from her quiet, wistful composure, that she herself looked startled by it.

Fax contemplated her, startled also. And he continued to stare.

"Do it again!" he ordered finally. "It's the best thing in your act."

Kerry flushed slightly. And then her eyelashes dropped.

"Please go on," she besought him. "I laughed because it seemed so *young*, somehow, to say you were sure Diana Darnston was beautiful."

"Laugh on, unappreciative one!" Fax ordered. "I will, however, call to your remembrance an ancient axiom in regard to the situation of those who laugh last. And then I will pass lightly to the next point. Diana seems to have lived in that house like a little ghost—drifting from room to room without talk or laughter, always gentle, always silent, always still. Especially was this true after the boy died——"

"I wish you wouldn't say 'died,'" Kerry objected. "You've put it into my head that he might not be dead after all, and I am going to go on thinking that."

"Fine business!" Fax encouraged her. "He may be alive, of course. In my mind there's a reasonable doubt. But that Diana's alive I'm sure—as sure as I am that you are. She was a great reader. She read all the time—poetry, for the most part. I looked over the books in their library. The poems had all been much read, and marked. The other books had not been touched. Some of them were not even cut.

"Well then, she's silent and gentle and still. She's been kept so close that she has a mind like a sheet of paper. She's probably more divinely innocent than any being we've ever known. Oh, I know I'm rhapsodizing," he admitted, as Kerry's limpid laughter, like a caged thing suddenly freed, sped across the space between them. "But her mind! Talk about sensitive plates! That girl's mind was so white and clear that every impression—every least tiny impression—wrote itself there. She grows up mothered and fathered by a pair of harpies, a pair of as ice-cold—no; death-cold—resistless old vampires as ever lived. At first she accepts them as children do, as an inevitable part of the inevitable scheme of things. But she, in addition to a mind, has brains. So, I fancy, had both children, for that matter. And out of the evil atmosphere, out of the black planning that surrounds them, as such things come to children, the sinister intention finally reaches them. In an indefinite number of whispered councils they set each other in these convictions. I can see the picture—can't you?—the two perplexed young creatures sitting night after night, watching the changes in the electric signs across the river, whispering their confidences in each other's ear, clinging to each other mentally and spiritually. Their way of life is unnatural, they tell each other; other children lead no such existence. Not only that, but Aunt Anstress and Uncle James don't really love them—they dislike them; they hate them. Just where the glide came—I mean that point when the twins realized that not only did the Guirks hate them but they intended, for the sake of the forty million dollars, to put them out of the way, I don't know. But when it did come——"

"You don't know it came at all," Kerry insisted.

"No; of course I don't *know* any of this. I am only following out a line of conjecture which, in my opinion, seems to account for all the circumstances. Finally, the twins decide to escape. They can't both go at once. There's no way that that can be managed. But if one can get away, he can help the other. Then the discussion narrows to the question: Who shall go first? The boy, of course. By what road? The river, inevitably. Dana can't swim, you understand, and he can't row. But he thinks he can manage under cover of the night, if once he can contrive to get into the boat, to paddle himself somewhere. One night he pulls this off. He rows up the river, lands, smashes the boat up, sets it afloat and conceals himself. By some method which I have not as yet succeeded

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in working out, he keeps in touch with his sister. Ultimately a body is found which the Guirks accept—and genuinely, perhaps—as his. It is given a proper burial, and life in the old brownstone house goes on as somberly as ever."

"You draw a horrid picture," Kerry commented disconsolately.

"In the mean time the Guirks pretend that they are much worried about the effect of Dana's death on Diana. They make much talk of her melancholia, drop hints to the servants, ask them to spy on her, increase their watchfulness. In spite of this—in some inexplicable way—the boy pulls off his sister's escape."

"I'd like to believe all you say," Kerry declared, as Fax's story came to end. "At least, not quite all. I would hate to think that two old people could be so wicked as you represent the Guirks. On the other hand, I want both these young people to live and have their chance at life. But I must admit it sounds awfully romantic to me. And from some points of view your theory doesn't seem to hold water. You credit Dana with abilities, it seems to me, far beyond his years. You don't seem to keep in mind he's only a boy. Moreover, he's absolutely inexperienced; he has no money. How could he plan out such a clever campaign?"

"I'll admit you've got me there. But I'm not telling you *how* he did it. I'm only saying I *think* he did it. Of course, it might be that somebody outside is engineering the whole campaign——"

"Have you the faintest suspicion who that third party could be?" Kerry queried.

"Well, of course there's one member of the family who has never been accounted for."

"You mean Aunt Hannah?"

"Yes."

"But I thought she disappeared into the Orient?"

"She did."

"And did she ever come back?"

"Not so far as anybody knows."

"Then——"

"But how could anybody know—if she wanted to keep her return a secret? I haven't any evidence to justify such a suspicion, and yet, of course, she *might* have come back and run the thing."

"Allow," Kerry arraigned him; "allow that everything you say is true. Allow that the boy did not drown, that his plan succeeded, that he got away in safety and devoted himself to trying to free his sister. Allow that he did manage to get into communication with her—I call your attention to the fact that you don't say how."

Fax admitted the truth of this indictment with a nod.

"I'll say there are holes everywhere in my story."

"However, allow all this, for the sake of argument—then how did the girl get out of the house?"

"In Diana's bedroom," Fax began easily, "hangs a picture. Diana Darnston must have looked at it so many times that finally it failed to register, took its place with those things, that looking at every day, we don't see at all. And then, suddenly, one day she saw it again. But now it held a sudden startling significance for her—it opened the door. It is the 'Meeting of Cæsar and Cleopatra.' Do you know it? By Gérôme, I think."

"Oh, describe it to me!"

"The scene is that of an Egyptian room. Julius Cæsar has been sitting at a table, has risen from his seat hurriedly—risen, in surprise, wonder, a sense of delicious panic, of inevitable romance. Cleopatra has been brought suddenly and unexpectedly into his presence. She stands before him, beautiful, alluring—nothing of the conventional enchantress about her. Yet she's the Serpent of old Nile all right—bewildering, tempting in the extreme. The point of my story is that she made this entrance by a ruse." Fax paused. His voice sank a little, but none the less there rang through it a note of exultation. "She was brought into Cæsar's presence wrapped up in a rug!"

"You mean—" Kerry's words snagged on a little breathless catch in her voice.

"I mean that Diana Darnston escaped in the rugs that Mrs. Guirk was looking at!"

KERRY considered this, her face the theatre of a dozen films of skepticism, amusement, interest, uncertainty.

"But the papers all say the clerk was one that Mrs. Guirk had bought rugs of for years—that he had been in Smyrniande's employ ever since they started."

"All true, too," Fax agreed. "Oswald Simpson's a dapper, harmless, talkative

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little man—perfectly adapted to get along with customers, especially when they are middle-aged women grossly ignorant and fatuously convinced of their own connoisseurship."

"But, then, how—" Kerry began. She stopped, started another line of interrogation. "But the other man said the same thing."

"True. To all of us. But the other man, Jim Coney, though trusted, was not an old employee. He quit his job. He had only been with Smyrniande a year. All the reporters saw him and talked with him—I among them. He seemed a mere hulk of inarticulate workman. It occurred to me to-day to go back to the place where he lived. He had left. Nobody knew where he had gone. I've spent the whole day trying to trace him. I can't. He's disappeared."

"How did they do it?" Kerry asked in a vexed voice. "Oh, I feel so stupid not thinking of anything like this!"

"Simpson, the little gabby guy, came to the Guirks' house in the street-car. Coney, the assistant, brought the rugs in a big covered motor-truck—the kind of hermetically sealed van that has a back door running up to the top. Coney, who's a giant for strength, carried these rugs in wads on his shoulder to the big room up-stairs. Remember he's a whale of a man who can juggle a grand piano. He and Simpson spent an hour spreading the rugs for Anstress. In the mean time Diana has been standing round, watching the proceedings and occasionally making a comment. She is a little listless, and after a while she says she's tired, decides to go down to her room. There she gets ready for her flight. Cuts one lock of hair off for a blind and drops it behind the bureau. Anstress continues to examine the rugs, finally makes a choice. Simpson disappears. Coney packs the rejected rugs in piles and lugs them down-stairs. On one of these trips, as previously arranged—and, of course, unknown to Simpson—he meets Diana. He wraps a big rug about her and throws her over his shoulder. He carries her down-stairs, puts her into the covered wagon, drives away, delivering rugs here and there. In the mean time, inside the van, Diana is changing her clothes. Somewhere along the road, in some quiet spot, Coney drops Diana. There's a hotel near, or a taxi waiting, or, more likely, a private car—or something. Anyway, she disappears."

"But where, in that case," Kerry asked, "is she now?"

Fax made a gesture of despair.

"That's not fair," he charged her. "I can perform marvels for you, but not miracles. Of course I don't know where she is. But what would I give to know!" He shook his head in a fresh access of disappointment. "How I would like to solve it! Of course, we'll all know the twenty-first of June, which is her birthday, and then, you remember, automatically she becomes safe from the Guirks. It's the longest day in the year, by the way. It won't be the longest day in the year for me," he prophesied grimly; "that will be the day before."

"But it's all so silly—her waiting until her birthday," Kerry objected. "Suppose the Guirks had no idea of making away with her—remember, I don't yet adopt your theory—certainly they could not do it in the few days that remain. The eyes of the world are on them now."

"Why not? They are a pair of Napoleons. Their whole play is that she's mentally depressed over the death of her brother. If they could get her in their possession again, why could they not throw her immediately into the river? Why would not that seem suicide—that she had fallen a victim to melancholia, while half-demented had run away and, on being found, had killed herself?"

"They could," Kerry admitted; "but of course they wouldn't. Nobody would dare do that."

"CENDRILLON, Kerrenhappuch, Kerry," Fax began quietly, "that pair of malevolent old crooks *could* dare and *would* dare anything—and they'd get away with it, too. All they've got in the way of character and ability—and, believe me, they've got a lot—is evil, essential, concentrated malevolence. Well, we'll all know in a week. But how I wish I could get at the truth ahead of the dénouement—if it's only the minute before the curtain falls on the last act! I'm not even hinting at all this in the paper. I can't prove it. If I should print it I would only put some one else on the track; and I am hoping for the incident or discovery which will confirm it. But what do you think of my story as a whole?"

Everybody's Magazine, June, 1923

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"I will admit I find it fascinating. It has its inconsistencies—what you call 'holes,' and although I think it's more to your credit as a fiction-writer than as a reporter, somehow it persists. Oh, how I wish I could read every newspaper account now in the light of what you've said! What are you going to do this week—I mean, in regard to the Darnston case?"

"I'm going over to Field Harbor to get on the trail of Aunt Hannah. She doesn't seem to interest anybody but me, but she interests me powerfully. Incidentally, of course, I'll look up the whole family."

"You'll tell me all about it when you come back?" Kerry asked.

"Of course."

For a moment silence fell between them. And then Fax spoke.

"Cendrillon, you can help me now. You will remember all these facts that I have given you—I mean, in regard to both the girl and the boy, won't you?"

Kerry nodded vigorously.

"Of course I will! How could I forget a word?"

"Well then, I want you to do something for me." And then, as a look of alarm spread over Kerry's face: "Oh, nothing that will mean action. You won't have to tell your aunt. It's only a job of thinking and imagining."

"I *can* think," Kerry said, with a slight emphasis of pride. "And I *can* imagine. All my life has been thinking and imagining."

"I want you to imagine yourself Diana Darnston. I mean the Diana Darnston that I have sketched for you—not the Diana Darnston that the papers have described. I want you to put yourself in her place. I want you to work out, if you can, how, if you were placed in that situation, you yourself would get into communication with the outside world."

Kerry burst into prolonged laughter.

"In other words, you are asking me to solve the mystery that the cleverest minds in New York can't unravel."

"I am not asking you to solve it. I am just asking you to put yourself in that girl's place and try to help me by the use of a girl's psychology. Your mind is so clear, so virgin— It is not filled up with all the truck that litters the minds of most women."

"But it would be too late to be of any help to you," Kerry objected. "I sha'n't see you for another week. And the day after that is Diana Darnston's birthday."

"I know that as well as you. I don't care anything about the newspapers now. The reward has never meant anything to me, anyway. But I'd like to work the puzzle out in my own mind before Diana walks into her lawyer's office and solves it for the world. Of course I don't know that you can help me. But, somehow, I trust to that instant imagination of yours."

Kerry looked perplexed. Then her eyes sparkled.

"I'll try," she promised gaily. "I'd like awfully to help you. I'll do my best. Who knows but I shall be the one to find the key! I feel as though I were working out a superproblem in higher mathematics." She mused, obviously thinking of that problem. Then, after a long silence, "I have a plan," Kerry said. "There's going to be an empty room—a Mrs. Deane is going away soon. Then I want you to apply for it. We'll set the date and the hour when I see you at godmother's dinner."

"Then we'll be living in the same house together!" Fax exclaimed.

"The very same house," Kerry acceded.

"But I'm going to keep on writing to you," Fax said.

"Oh, do!" Kerry breathed. "I can't get along without your letters now. There was only one drawback to seeing you to-night again and that was that I wouldn't get a letter."

"Oh, yes, you will," Fax informed her. "I have one in my pocket now."

"Oh, give it to me!" Kerry demanded.

A SQUARE envelope passed from his hand to hers. Kerry sat holding it. For a moment they only looked at each other. Kerry's gray eyes, meeting Fax's blue ones, became suddenly so soft that it was as though their sparkling starriness had melted. But Fax's eyes, meeting hers, might have suddenly lighted bonfires.

"It was sweet of you to think to write the letter—" Kerry's voice had run down almost to inaudibility. And then the church bell broke the silence with twelve sonorous strokes.

Kerry jumped to her feet. The Golden Serpent—Jay, a measurable distance behind her; Joshua, with his drawling gait, last of all—came flying out of the house.

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"It's really very unfair being a Cinderella," Kerry herself objected, "because you simply must vanish at twelve o'clock."

"But the third night Cinderella didn't vanish at all, you remember," the Golden Serpent reminded her.

"But that was because they had a prince for her," Kerry returned. "If you want me to stay the third time, you must have a prince for me."

"I will buy you a prince," the Golden Serpent promised. "You have brought me so much luck that that's the least I can do for you. Why, I'd even be willing to purchase a carpenter or a plumber for you. And in these days carpenters and plumbers cost money. Remember, Cendrillon, you are not to mention that I am here. And don't take the curtain down from your window."

"I will remember," Kerry said.

"After the next time, Cendrillon," her godmother went on, "you may tell the world. But don't forget not to tell it now."

"I won't forget," Kerry said.

KERRY woke the next morning into a troubled world. The trouble lay, she realized after a moment, not without, in the dewy, still, world that encompassed her, but within, in her own consciousness. An unpleasant experience lay before her, and she knew it. However, she set her teeth. But she did not seek that unpleasant experience; she let it find her. After breakfast and after the regular long morning talk with Aunty K over the process of making beds and rendering bedrooms orderly again, she returned to her room. She sat down before her little typewriter and assiduously went through the exercises prescribed by the omniscient pamphlet. But her look was absent; her eyes wandered from the page, and her fingers, which were now becoming each day more nimble, stumbled on the keys. More and more frequently she glanced in the direction of the door, as though she expected something to happen. Throughout an uneventful day the feeling persisted. Finally, with a sudden air of resolution, she went to Mrs. Deane's room, knocked on her door. When she came out, half an hour later, she left Mrs. Deane weeping. Her own face was very grave.

She did not leave her room again, except for meals, after that. After dinner she returned down-stairs to excuse herself for not accompanying Mrs. Lane on her evening walk.

She found her aunt hatted, gloved, veiled, patiently waiting.

"Oh, Kerry, leave this book with Miss Ryan as you pass," she said to her niece, as Kerry started up-stairs again. "I promised to lend it to her."

Kerry continued along the hall toward her own room. Miss Ryan's door was exactly opposite her own. She knocked. There followed a sound which she translated as a summons to enter. She opened the door. There was nobody there. But even as she stood on the threshold, Miss Ryan emerged from her closet, her blouse off, the slender arms and a great scallop of her satiny olive neck bare. At the sight of Kerry her hand flashed to her neck, clutched into convulsive concealment something that hung there at the end of a fine gold chain.

"Oh, Miss Ryan," Kerry said, her eyes, apparently absent, wandering over the room, "here's the book aunty promised you. Excuse me for bursting in on you the way I did. I thought I heard you say, 'Come in!' "

"You heard me say, 'Darn it!' " Miss Ryan admitted, with even more than her usual vivacity, her hand still holding the object on the end of the chain. "All my hat-boxes suddenly tumbled forward from the shelf on my head."

As Kerry opened her own door, mentally she went over the little incident. Her mind had retained the picture of Miss Ryan standing in the frame of the closet door—before her hand had flashed to her neck. There occurred to her—inevitably it would—the amusing coincidence of Miss Darling's talk and of Tom Udell's words the night of her arrival at the boarding-house. Tom Udell had said, "Diana Darnston's only ornament was a small, chased gold ring."

Miss Ryan's slender dark fingers, flying with convulsive haste upward, had covered a small, chased gold ring!

More than half that night Kerry lay awake. And all the night her latest letter lay caught in the laces of her nightgown over her heart. At intervals, as anxiety, even panic, tore at her, she clutched it as though it were a guard against these unpleasant emotions, or a sanctuary from

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them, or perhaps even a touchstone which melted them. For she was beset with another perplexity. She had seen Mrs. Deane's head appearing above the sill of her oriel last night; but later, after Mrs. Deane had disappeared, she had seen another head there. But the second invader of her room—the short, closely-cropped head presenting a very different outline from Mrs. Deane's puffed contour—was undoubtedly Miss Ryan.

For a week affairs drifted as usual in the "Maison Lane," as Joe Nickel liked to call it. In the mean time the Darnston case was still a front-page feature in the newspapers. Normally it would have retired to the back pages within the nine days allotted to wonder. But the fact that it might be solved dramatically on the twenty-first of June kept curiosity agog—kept Diana Darnston to the fore.

Then there came the period when the newspapers, having exhausted nearly every other possibility, went on the trail of Aunt Hannah; by now she was the leading feature—save for Diana Darnston herself. She alone, among the minor characters, suggested mystery. But nothing, except for some dark suggestions of the *Bulletin*, turned up to throw any light on Aunt Hannah's whereabouts or to suggest any relation with the case. The proved facts remained exactly the same as when Aunt Hannah appeared on the stage. To wit:

When the children were five, the Guirks and Aunt Hannah had a quarrel. Immediately afterward Aunt Hannah had a long, lingering illness, which resulted in a nervous breakdown. As soon as she was well she departed for the Orient. That was the last anybody had seen of her. She was traced to the steamer which bore her across the Pacific from San Francisco. A Tokyo correspondent proved from an old register that she had lived for a week in the Orient Hotel. Then silence—then darkness——

And all the time absorbed old Father Time was weaving, between the first and second dinner in the secret garden, a fortnight which seemed longer than any year Kerry had ever known. Closely spun, finely woven, not an hour, not a minute, not a second was scanted. Every night on the back of her calendar Kerry marked off small blocks of hours, large blocks of minutes, larger blocks of seconds in the hope of bringing the second dinner nearer. And once she took her little clock and shook it furiously. But—alas!—the effect of this was not to speed up Father Time, but only to break the clock.

WHEN Kerry crossed the threshold of the secret garden, a slim dark figure, suddenly materializing out of the twilight, confronted her. Not Fax, not Joshua, not Jay—it was her godmother. She stood there, slender finger to smiling lip, a moon of mischief in each of her great yellow-gray eyes.

"Not a word," she breathed. "I'm planning a surprise for the men. They can't come into the garden until I tell them."

She took Kerry's frail, soft little hand in her smooth, decisive, bigger one. She led her through the empty garden, past a table gorgeous with the trappings of another dinner, up the balcony steps into the house. There was no light, and Kerry, still following the guidance of that smooth, decisive hand, stumbled up the stairway to the fifth floor. Darkness there. But the Golden Serpent turned a door-knob. Entering the big room into which the door swung, Kerry seemed to dive into an ocean of light.

It was a bedroom such as she had never seen—the walls hung with tapestries which pictured to her swift, startled glances shadowy vistas leading deep into deer-haunted forests; a huge bed canopied in golden brocade; delicately carved furniture upholstered in the same golden brocade. A wide dressing-case, backed by a huge three-part looking-glass, spread to her view enameled boxes in brilliant colors, articles of the toilet in gold and pearl, candlesticks, tiny swinging mirrors.

On the bed lay what might be translated into a gown, although superficially it looked like a film of ivory-colored-dawn luster which had floated in through the window. But beside it, obvious enough, were satin slippers, silk stockings.

"I am going to dress you up," the Golden Serpent said. "I am tired of seeing you in those mousy dresses. I am all in black tonight, and you shall wear all white."

The black, shining fabric of the Golden Serpent's gown clung to her close, dropped long fringes of black. It was supplemented

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by a floating black scarf, black-satin slippers. Neck, arms and shoulders were bared in slashing triangles. Except for the olive whiteness of these areas, there was not a flash of color anywhere. Yes; one—or two. From her ears hung, at the end of tiny chains, enormous canary-colored diamonds.

"Now take off that brown thing," the Golden Serpent ordered, "and those horrid country slippers, and put on these."

Kerry obeyed blindly.

The Golden Serpent lifted the ivory-colored shred from the bed, drew it over Kerry's head, shoulders, hips—snapped here, hooked there, pulled it down the entire length of its Paris-made slimness.

"Now look at yourself," she commanded.

Kerry stared into the eyes of the snowy, gleaming stranger in the long mirror—stared, amazed. And the stranger, no less startled, stared—stared, amazed at her. Kerry had, of course, looked innumerable times at her own neck and arms and shoulders, looked at them with the incurious, unnoting glance of the uninterested. It was strange to find the shining ivory gown—sleeveless, deeply cut at the front and back—blending with their ivory silkiness, and blending so seamlessly that she looked like a statuette carved from some ivory-lustered substance. The beautiful, heavily soft fabric did other magic things. It made her gray eyes a darker gray and her crimson lips a deeper crimson. In some incredible way it seemed to whip up that strange ferment which glowed in her dusky hair.

Whatever the three men thought, it was quite apparent that, for an astonished moment, they could not express that thought. But when Kerry, eyelashes down in her first real shyness, descended the steps to her chair, it was in the midst of a flurry of admiring phrases. Fax alone was silent. When she was seated, he leaned over her.

"Did they dig you up at Tanagra?" he demanded.

KERRY'S third Arabian Nights' banquet was over. But the five still sat about the table, talking. And still, the spell of new beauty on her, Kerry asked herself if she were dreaming. If she were, she hoped fervently that she would never wake.

The others were discussing the ominpresent Darnston case. Kerry listened in a delicious daze.

"I maintain," Joshua insisted obstinately, "that she's married. The extras will begin to come out in the middle of to-morrow morning to announce it."

"Poor devil!" Jay's misanthropy on the subject of matrimony never missed a chance to explode in cynicism.

"No; I don't feel it's a case of runaway marriage," Fax asserted, with a slight touch of irritation. "I don't know what it is, but, somehow, I don't feel it's that."

Kerry listened with half an ear, for Fax was only repeating what he had written for the *Sphere*. But that preoccupation of hers, it would seem, was not all the languor of dreams; it carried another interest. At intervals, which apparently she tried to make irregular, her eyes went up to the oriel window of her room, examined it, carefully dropped again. A dim light burned in that room, so that the window was faintly luminous. Anybody approaching the oriel would be made visible from the garden.

"Anyway, we'll know to-morrow," Fax announced pessimistically. "It won't help my case any, of course, but it will relieve my natural curiosity. And it's time for a sensation. We can't keep this mystery hot much longer."

"After all," the Golden Serpent struck in briskly, "why wait until to-morrow for a sensation? Why not have one now? I've got a sensation up my sleeve, and I'm going to explode it now. Cendrillon, when you came into the garden that night, you didn't know who any one of us were, did you?"

"No."

"And you didn't guess?"

"No."

The Golden Serpent jumped from her chair. Raising her black-lace scarf aloft, she danced—rather, she floated—about the garden. Her little black-satin feet touched the rug so delicately that the onlookers might well have been puzzled as to whether she sustained that drifting scarf or whether it suspended her. Kerry's eyes, gleaming with dazzlement, followed her for an instant. Then the light in them died to a composed coolness. She lifted her glance to her oriel window. A head—that of a woman—appeared there. Kerry nodded slightly. The head withdrew.

Suddenly, with a swift step, decisive as a finale of a clog, the Golden Serpent ceased dancing. She walked sedately back to her

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chair. She stood there, her slim olive hand on its high, curved vermilion back.

"Cendrillon," she announced, "permit me to introduce the real me—Elsie Lennore—at your service! Allow me to introduce my manager, the Napoleon of film-producers, whose name you must see nightly written among the stars—Mr. Joshua Macgill. Allow me to introduce a gentleman who is writing a film for me—Mr. Jay Harrideane, whose name will soon be with Joshua's. Allow me to introduce the star reporter of the New York *Sphere*, Mr.—— Oh, how this bores me! One minute is as long as I can be formal."

With an air curiously preoccupied, and with none of the surprise Elsie Lennore expected, Kerry acknowledged these introductions.

"Let me introduce myself," she said almost mechanically, "Kerrenhappuch Lane But please don't call me 'Kerrenhappuch'——"

"We certainly won't," Elsie Lennore announced. "It sounds like a vaudeville team."

"Call me 'Kerry,' if you will, unless——"

"I shall continue to call you 'Cendrillon,'" Elsie Lennore decided, "because it was as Cendrillon that you brought me luck."

"What luck was it that I brought you?" Kerry asked curiously.

"You see," Elsie Lennore began, "I'd always played one kind of part——"

"Yes, I know—a tomboy," Cendrillon finished for her. "They've told me all about you in the boarding-house."

"Yes; and I was tired of that sort of thing. I knew I could do something different. I wanted a picturesque, an interesting part. Vampires had gone out, but—And, of course, Joshua wouldn't let me. He was sure that I would be ruined if I changed my type. All this was in California. While he were fighting it out, I got a letter from a young man in Syracuse. He said that he had been studying my style and that he thought it was time for me to change. He had some ideas about a new departure for me if I was willing to make myself look different. His ideas interested me. His name was——"

"Harrideane," Kerry supplied it for her again.

"Of course! My hair was short. But I got a beautiful black wig with a comb that made me nine feet tall. I had a long, slim dress made. I had my pictures taken in this new scenery and sent one of them to Harrideane, telling him to write a scenario about it. He did that, and I liked it so much that I wired him to hire a house for me in New York and took a train East, leaving a letter of explanation for Joshua——"

"Which meant," Joshua interrupted grimly, "that I took the next train after hers."

"Yes," Elsie Lennore said, with satisfaction. "I knew he'd do that. Jay helped me fix up this little place. It hadn't been lived in for years. I had telegraphed to Jay to find a house for me; but he couldn't do it. Then I had the greatest piece of luck. I just happened to mention to Francis Y. Sullivan—my lawyer, you know—that I wanted to hire a house where no one could find me and, if possible, where no one could see me. He's attorney for the Van Dordrechts. Just that very day he'd begun to administer the estate of the last of the family, who died in Florence in May. No one but Mr. Sullivan knew that the house was for rent—the first time in thirty years. I came in the morning, and by night it was as you see it. Joshua arrived in the evening, bringing with him Fax, an old friend, whom he'd met on Fifth Avenue. We were talking over the new film when I happened to look up, and there you were in the window, with your eyes as big as saucers. I had a hunch to invite you down here. You know the rest. The reason I asked you not to tell about me was because I didn't want anybody to know where I was in New York. Of course you helped my game by not recognizing me. It was an awful blow, though, to meet somebody who had never seen—or heard of—Elsie Lennore."

KERRY seemed to be listening with the closest attention to all this. Her eyes fixed themselves on Elsie Lennore's face, and yet it was apparent—to Fax, for instance—that it was only the shell of her hearing which listened. Inwardly, she waited for something else. At the end of Elsie Lennore's peroration that something came—a footstep. Kerry's eyes went to the garden gate. A figure appeared there—a woman. And Mrs. Deane, in her slender, shimmerless black, entered the garden. For an instant she stood, her eyelids down. Then they lifted, and her great green-gray eyes shot a

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When Kerry crossed the threshold of the secret garden, a slim dark figure confronted her. It was her godmother. "Not a word," she breathed.

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glance of entreaty into their midst. The effect on the garden group was paralyzing.

Elsie Lennore stared at her in incensed amazement—dumb for the first time in Kerry's experience with her. Joshua and Fax rose to their feet, stood in an equal stupefaction. But Jay Harrideane, after an instant of astounded immobility, hurried toward her.

"Glennye! Glennye!" he murmured brokenly, and his voice was all wonder and gladness. "Oh, my darling—I'm so glad!" He put his arm about her and, drawing her past the group, still crystallized in astonishment, led her into the house.

"She's his wife," Kerry explained simply. "You didn't know, fairy godmother, when you made that melodramatic trip from California to New York, that you were going to ride right through a happy marriage. But you did. He was in business and unsuccessful. He wanted to make some money for her sake. When he was in college he used to write all the farces. He knew how much money there is in moving pictures, and he wanted to try it. He began to write scenarios; but he told nobody—not even his wife. He wanted to surprise her. However, his wife opened a desk drawer in his office one day and came across your photograph. In it you wore your big black wig. She didn't recognize Elsie Lennore. Who would? She said nothing, but she watched him. Next, she found your telegram asking him to meet you at the station in New York and to hire a house for you. When Mr. Harrideane returned that night, she had gone, leaving a note accusing him of— But she came to New York herself and watched your meeting. She followed him all day. She saw him go into this house. Then you arrived. She watched those swift preparations you made to furnish it—all in a few hours. In the mean time she had looked over the neighborhood. There was one house, she calculated, which might have windows looking on this yard. That was the boarding-house my aunt keeps. She applied for a room, hoping to get one which had such a window. My aunt could not give her that, because there was only one such room, and I had it. But both nights that I have been here Mrs. Harrideane had watched us all from my window. When you took off your wig she saw that you were Elsie Lennore. Still, she suspected— I discovered that she had been in my room during my absence and accused her of it. Then she told me her story. From what I had heard you say, I guessed the truth— In fact, I arranged with her this little meeting. I hope you will forgive me."

AND into the silence that fell upon the little group broke another unexpected arrival. Again in the alley an alien footstep sounded. And on this occasion Kerry was as startled as the others. With them, her gaze went to the garden gate, went with a look of surprise, of curiosity in which was mingled a little unpleasant anticipation. Again a figure appeared. It was Delight Ryan. The curiosity did not die out of Kerry's eyes, but the trouble did.

Miss Ryan came forward slowly, her crimson lips parted over her sparkling teeth. Again Fax arose. And again Elsie Lennore stared with an air of outrage. In a mitigated degree Kerry shared her emotion.

Miss Ryan was dressed with a meticulous care. Only a hand gifted with the maximum of sartorial cunning could have fashioned that slim, straight gown which made almost insolent parade of its lack of decoration. Of a blue almost black, it cast into high relief the whiteness of the little glistening gloves, the little glistening shoes, the little glistening hat over which a black wing slashed at a piquant angle.

"Miss Lennore," Miss Ryan began in the suavest of accents, "you have been advertising for a ring. You dropped it in the taxi-cab which you took from the station the day you arrived in New York. When you left the cab at this house, I got in. In spite of your wig I recognized you at once. I found the ring when I left the cab. You say something about a reward in your advertisement. I have been waiting for a chance to see you personally to claim the only reward I want—an interview with Macgill. I have tried now for two years to get to him."

"Films?"

"Yes."

"Experience?"

"None; but I've had a test. They took my name. They said they'd send for me."

Elsie Lennore extended her hand, peremptory palm upward. Miss Ryan advanced and laid the ring on its olive surface. Elsie Lennore examined it carefully.

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"Yes; it's my ring." She slipped it on her finger. "It's always been my mascot until I met Cendrillon. The only failure I've ever had was once when I didn't wear it. Yes; I'll give you an interview. You have a camera-face. You ought to screen well.". She raised her voice to imperious heights. "Joshua! Joshua!"

Macgill's gaunt height, surmounted by its thatch of Irish hair, appeared at one of the long French windows on the first floor.

"Joshua, I've promised this girl an interview with you!" Elsie Lennore called carelessly. "She's had no experience, but I think she'd register well."

A look of resignation that was apparent to the group spread over Macgill's face.

"All right! Send her in."

"Her name is——"

"Miss Ryan, Miss Lennore," Kerry interrupted swiftly.

"If you will come into the house, Miss Ryan," Macgill went on, after the curt nod which he dropped in their direction from the window, "we can have our talk in here. I have just ten minutes for you."

THE evening was still comparatively young. Inside, in one room, the Harrideanes, their arms about each other, were exchanging those vows of eternal fidelity with a zest that only the newly reconciled know. Inside, in another room, Elsie Lennore, Delight Ryan and Joshua Macgill were exchanging the gossip of the film-world with a zest that only the newly acquainted know. Outside in the garden, Kerry and Fax were alone. Wong had cleared the table of all except the glittering crystals, the flowers. The moon had climbed higher in the sky. All zenith-silver now, it made the most of the trees and the bushes, of the Gothic windows, and of the fountain, which, in its turn, made the most of the moon.

"Your trip wasn't very successful, then," Kerry said gently.

"No," Fax admitted morosely. "I didn't turn up anything of any real consequence. Of course, as I told you in my letters, I'd found—I didn't mention it to-night, because I didn't feel like talking—that there wasn't the same feeling about the Guirks in Field Harbor that there was in New York. A lot of people there shared my view of them; only, they didn't express it the way I did. 'A pair of old skinflints;' 'Close as the bark of a tree;' 'Pinching the penny till it bleeds,' is the way they put it. I dug up a curious story about Anstress, though. When she was seven, she choked two kittens to death—deliberately, said the people who told me about her. Oh, they don't like the Guirks in Field Harbor, believe me!"

"I am glad you didn't tell the others about that," Kerry murmured. "I think it's wise to wait until you have all the facts."

"I've got to have them by to-morrow morning," Fax remarked despairingly, "for them to do me any good. But have you been able, in the light of what I told you, to guess anything yourself about Diana?"

"I have been thinking it over," Kerry admitted. "I did exactly what you advised. I put myself in that girl's place and tried to work out a plan of escape. Of course, I got awfully interested. And after a while ideas came. I am going to tell you it all, exactly as though it was a story that had happened."

Fax refilled his pipe.

"Once upon a time—" he prodded her.

"I'll recapitulate in regard to money first," Kerry began in a leisurely manner. "When Admeh Darnston died, he left fifty million dollars—twenty millions to each of his twin children and five millions apiece to his sister Anstress and her husband, James Guirk. He made the Guirks guardians of his twin children. There was no other close relative except Aunt Hannah—his wife's sister. He left her no money, because his wife had provided for her in her own will. Although she was not so rich as the others, Hannah was quite comfortable financially. Now, Admeh, of course, believed that his sister and her husband were a kindly, affectionate pair who would devote themselves to bringing up his two children. But they were nothing of the sort. They were a pair to whom nothing counted but money. They loved money so much that they were capable of doing anything for it. When they realized that if both the twins died they would be worth—plus their own ten million—fifty million dollars and more, they were confronted by a temptation too strong for them to resist. Admeh Darnston had not been dead six months before the Guirks made up their minds that they were going to get that money by fair means or foul."

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"So far so good," Fax agreed.

"There was apparently no obstacle in their way when first they made up their minds to this. But as the months went by an obstacle developed—Aunt Hannah. Aunt Hannah was the kind of person you described in your letters—gentle, but strong, intuitive and resourceful. She was one of those people who get instantly other people's moods, emotions, characters, even; who, coming into a room, can feel what sort of scene she had invaded—just as animals scent in the air the presence of other animals or humans. How Aunt Hannah got it, I don't know. When she got it, or where she got it, I don't know; but somehow she breathed it in out of the air that the intention of that malevolent pair toward those two babies was criminal. I say, I don't know how she got it; but to make my story hold water, she *must* have guessed it. More than that, she must have accused them of it. Did she overhear them talking about it? I believe she did. And, as I say, I think she accused them of it. That was her mistake. Fighting in the dark, she might have won; her sixth sense would have helped. But fighting in the open, she had no more chance with them than a gazelle with a pair of wolves. What they said to her, I don't know. What they did to her, I don't know. But remember they had five million dollars apiece, and, for the time being, the control of over forty millions more. And money can accomplish almost anything."

Kerry paused.

"I don't mind your stopping for breath," Fax encouraged her. "One must breathe to live."

"At any rate," Kerry went on, unheeding, "suddenly Aunt Hannah broke down. You remember there were two or three years of nervous prostration when she was under the care of specialists and nurses all the time. In your letters you told me that she never once in that period permitted herself to see the Guirks. My theory is that they held over her something terrific with which, for the time, they terrorized her utterly. You have yourself said many times that people with money could do anything. Perhaps they threatened to get rid of her. Perhaps they threatened her with an asylum. At any rate, although they didn't stop her, they made her harmless for the time being. Aunt Hannah realized that she couldn't compete with them in the open. So, what happened?"

The question was not addressed to Fax, but he answered it promptly.

"Aunt Hannah disappeared."

"Exactly. Aunt Hannah knew she could save the children from their fates only by disappearing. For two years she fought to regain her strength. Once she was herself again, she made her plans to leave the country—to go to the Orient. And she carried those plans out. But, in fact, she did not lose herself at all; she returned to the United States in exactly one month."

"CENDRILLON, you ought to write fiction," Fax approved.

"I am beginning to think so myself. Now, in the mean time the Guirks had gone to New York. They settled themselves in the old Darnston house in the Eighties. They produced a superficial effect of cultivating people socially, but the cultivation was all on the outside. They joined the church. They did everything that pillars of the church should do. They entertained church dignitaries and church societies; but they were careful never to make any real friends —any intimates. Nobody came to their house who knew anything about their real life. They engaged three servants at such wages as insured their staying with them always. Benton, the butler, was a middle-aged man as stupid as he looked. Mary, the Irish cook, had a head that nothing could penetrate. She was a little deaf, too. Rose, the second maid, was almost a moron."

"Good work!" Fax urged her on. "That 'moron' is a touch of genius."

"The Guirks gave out that they didn't want the existence of these millionaire children to be known, because the newspapers might write them up and because they were in fear of kidnapers. And so the Guirks never permitted the children out of the house unaccompanied. They never permitted the children to make any friends. Superficially, the Guirks seemed to be taking an extraordinary care of them; for although the twins possessed every toy known to childhood, they were never permitted to do anything dangerous. They could not learn to swim. They could not learn to drive a motor-car. The Guirks did not possess an automobile. Whenever

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it was necessary to go anywhere, they sent for a taxi. The Guirks themselves used, every evening, to row on the river; they had brought this rural habit from Field Harbor—but they never allowed the children to enter the boat. The boat was always there, though, tethered by the yard wall. The children saw it every day of their lives, but they never set foot in it. They could play in the yard, in the playroom, or on the roof, but nowhere else. The only recreation they had was flying kites—and they flew kites all the time. This, after lessons, occupied their afternoons. But evenings were long, dull periods, when they could only read; and so they had all the books they wanted—they had the newspapers and magazines. But I fancy people like you and me have no idea what the loneliness was like. Why, the only telephone in the house was in Mrs. Guirk's room. Sometimes the twins sat and watched the river-scenes, and at those times, just as the papers said, they used to enjoy the big electric advertising signs across the river which flashed in various colors advertisement after advertisement all the evening long. Those river-windows—every paper, of course, laid great stress on this—were grilled; so that there was no possibility of their falling out."

"HURRY up, Cendrillon!" Fax prodded her. "You're only expanding what I've told you."

"Wait!" Kerry ordered briefly. "Now, in the mean time the children were growing up. They had passed from little childhood to big childhood, from big childhood to boyhood and girlhood. From boyhood and girlhood they were approaching youth. And that is the period in the lives of these two babes in the wood that I find it most difficult to describe. Of course, at first the twins loved Aunt Anstress and Uncle James. Except for the tutors and governesses, who were changed every year, and the servants, their uncle and aunt constituted their entire world. The children continued to love them until— I don't know, of course, when that period came when they began to realize that Aunt Anstress and Uncle James did not really love them at all. It must have been rather late; for, you see, their lives were not at all like other children's lives. At first, when they began to realize this, they must have wondered why it was so. Then they began to resent it, began to try to circumvent that eternal espionage which surrounded them. They must have made some secret effort to rebel against it, because you yourself found out that they borrowed the camera from the boy next door in order that Dana might take some pictures of Diana. I mention this because it is important—in *my* version of this story. Don't forget"—Kerry sighed a long sigh—"it is such a difficult story to tell. It's so hard to simplify it."

"I know," Fax agreed. "You're only up against what the reporter is up against every day of his life."

"Take Dana first, then. Here was a boy, big, strong, well grown for his years, muscular but lithe, very active. He was high-spirited, full, in short, of what people call 'pep.' Much earlier than Diana he began to resent the situation and, much stronger than Diana, to fight it. He rebelled first and inoculated Diana with his rebellion. But Diana it was who first got it that the intentions of the Guirks were criminal. I repeat I don't know how she got it. I can only explain this by the theory that the Guirks kept her mind so pure and clear that it was pure and clear enough to reflect their own intentions. These intentions were so black and hard that the Guirks could not prevent them from reflecting in those limpid depths. I can guess that it came first as a kind of depression, then an uneasiness, then a suspicion, then an espionage on her own account, then a conviction. Perhaps she shared this with Dana from the beginning; perhaps she didn't tell him until she was sure. At any rate, somewhere along their middle teens, the twins realized in its full enormity what the situation was. That marks the end of one era in their story, the beginning of another, Remember that business about the boat. Dana was expressly forbidden ever to get into it; nevertheless, there it was *always*—always it was there to tempt him. Of course he spoke to Diana a hundred, a thousand times of how he would like to row on the river some night after the Guirks had gone to bed. Constantly he kept on the lookout for a chance, but it never occurred to him to steal out late at night to try it until——

"Every night the Guirks examined all the windows in the house to see that they

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were locked—every night but one. Once one of the lower windows needed mending. A glazier was called in. He worked all the afternoon. Dana saw that that window was not locked when he left. The Guirks, perhaps by accident, perhaps by design, didn't examine the windows that night. And that night Dana crawled out, got into the boat and, while it still lay tied to the garden wall, made experiments in rowing as far as the length of the rope would permit. That was the beginning of a series of nocturnal adventures on the river. Diana never went with him, but Dana went alone again and again. He was determined to manage an escape, first for himself and then for his sister."

Again Kerry breathed deeply.

"As you pass each mile-stone of this improvisation," Fax commented in amusement, "you sigh as though you had accomplished one part of a great journey."

"That's the way I feel," Kerry admitted. "Now we're returning to Aunt Hannah. Aunt Hannah is back from the Orient—in the United States—in New York, to be explicit. She is living here secretly under an assumed name. She has but one idea in life, and that is to manage the escape of the Darnston twins before the Guirks kill them, and that will be some time before their twenty-first birthday. But how to get into communication with them? It would be fatal to let the Guirks know she was near. And, of course, the children, she knew, as the whole world now knows, were watched like a pair of great diamonds. But Aunt Hannah, as I said before, was a resourceful woman. Of course, Diana and Dana went to church every Sunday. Uncle James sat at the aisle-end of the middle double section of pews, Anstress next to him, then Diana, then Dana. This brought Dana against the partition that separated the two pews. One Sunday a stranger sat beside him in that pew. This stranger was a man. During the service he seemed a little inept at finding his place in the hymn-book, and Dana politely shared his with him. The man absently placed it beside him when the singing was over. When he returned the book to Dana at the close of the service, there was a sealed envelope in it. On it was written: 'Diana and Dana. Do not let your aunt and uncle see this.' Dana slipped it into his pocket."

"I believe the greatest unknown female novelist in the world is talking to me now," Fax applauded her briefly.

Kerry paid no attention.

"When Diana and Dana were next alone—and, of course, they were a great deal alone, and by choice always—they read the note. It was from Aunt Hannah. She told them that she was near them in New York and was planning their escape. She emphasized the necessity of action as soon as possible. She said: 'Correspondence of this kind is too dangerous. In the future, I will communicate with you by means of——' "

KERRY paused, and perhaps at no time in her narrative had she shown so concentrated a look.

"You have had two inspirations in regard to the disappearance of Diana—an intuition in regard to the real character of the Guirks and an idea as to how Diana managed her escape. I've had an inspiration, too. There was one detail in all the newspaper stories that stuck in my mind. And last night, when I was thinking this story out, suddenly— It was that picture all the newspapers drew of the twins sitting in their room night after night, watching the electric signs across the river. Have you ever seen those signs? Perhaps I am the only person in New York who has thought of them in connection with Diana's disappearance. I have them copied in typewriting in my room now. One of them contains all the letters in the alphabet."

"Which one?" Fax answered quickly.

"Johnson's Birch Soap," Kerry answered.

"I don't remember that," Fax said thoughtfully, "but I have been gone for over five years."

"Oh," Kerry exclaimed, with a triumphant inflection, "if it's been put on within the last six years, that helps my story a lot. Suppose Aunt Hannah's letter ran like this: 'I will communicate with you by means of the new electric sign across the river, the one advertising Johnson's Birch Soap. It will begin to-night or to-morrow night. Watch for it. It contains a code. Pay no attention to it until nine o'clock. After that, when the colors begin to change, take down every second red letter and every second blue letter. They will make a message. Take it down in pencil. Study it

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until you are sure of everything it says. Then destroy what you have written. Destroy this note, too. To make certain, it will begin the message again sharp at ten o'clock and again at eleven. Keep your watches exactly on standard time. Nights when I have nothing to say, I will flash, 'No message,' and you may go to bed. Many of my messages will ask you questions. Reply by means of your kites. A white one will mean 'Yes.' A kite of any other color will mean 'No.' Two kites of different colors will mean 'I don't understand.'

"The twins read the note in whispers to each other until they had it fixed word for word in their memories. Then they destroyed it. But they didn't entirely understand until the next evening, when the new electric sign appeared across the river among the other signs which they had been watching for so many years. It advertised Johnson's Birch Soap. It read:

"Johnson's Birch Soap
For Particular Washing
In Toilet and Laundry,
Strong as an Ox,
Mild as a Breeze,
Gives Quick Lather.

"If you study that legend carefully, you will see that it contains every letter in the alphabet."

FAX drew from his pocket a stub lead-pencil and a wad of paper.

"Say that again slowly," he asked. Fax's pencil flew in his rapid shorthand at Kerry's dictation.

"So it does!" he exclaimed, after a moment of calculation.

"It flashed those lines one by one," Kerry went on, "in ordinary yellow lights. Then the whole legend comes out in yellow, and then breaks out into every color of the rainbow—one letter yellow, one red, one blue, one green, and so on. It remains so for half a minute, and then goes out and repeats the whole performance.

"Now, back to the twins. We can imagine them at nine o'clock watching with all their eyes when the full legend came up and became incandescent. They looked only for the red and blue letters. They watched until ten o'clock, when the same thing happened again—and again at eleven. Next morning the twins sent up a white kite.

"Now, we'll assume that this comunication, by means of the electric sign, went on almost nightly. Of course, the messages had to be brief. But it is amazing how much you can get into a few words when you must. And sometimes the sign would 'talk,' as the twins perhaps called it, for half an hour at a time. Aunt Hannah gave them all they needed to know about herself, and revealed her plans. She intended to manage Dana's escape first. In this she was unconsciously assisted by the Guirks themselves. Of course, Dana had supposed these excursions on the river were not known. But they were known. All the time, the Guirks had tacitly permitted Dana to escape through the window that the glazier had mended, and of course they left the boat there to tempt him. One night, however, when Dana tried to get through his window, he found it locked. He wasn't satisfied. He tried all the others, tried the back door—all locked! A window in the second floor, however—and, as it happened, by a genuine accident—had been left open. From it he climbed, very softly, into the yard—crept to the river wall. The boat was gone. But as he passed the shed in the yard, dark as it was there, he caught a glimmer of light. He crawled over to the door, knelt down and looked through the keyhole. Uncle James was there, and the boat was there. There was a great ragged hole in the bottom of the boat, as though it had been smashed out by a blow from a sledge-hammer. And Uncle James was busily engaged in the process of gluing that ragged, broken piece of board, which he had smashed out, back into place. Much mystified, Dana crept up-stairs to bed. The next day he told Diana what he had seen. Diana explained easily enough——"

"Take another long breath!" Fax commanded.

Kerry obeyed.

"The Guirks had tempted him to steal away on the river. And now Uncle James had made the boat unseaworthy. Diana recalled to Dana that Uncle James had been a cabinet-maker in his youth. The next time Dana rowed the boat the broken board would melt away like tissue-paper, and, as he could not swim, he would drown. It proved conclusively that all their suspicions and Aunt Hannah's suspicions were justified. But what to do? However,

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Aunt Hannah had provided for just such an emergency in the letter that was passed to Dana in church. If ever there was necessity for quick action, the children were to send up that day a kite with a black tail. And from their window that night they must lower to just below the level of the water a hot-water bottle containing a message. After midnight, a dory would come along and get it."

KERRY paused, breathless. Fax listened, breathless himself.

"Two nights later Dana Darnston went rowing on the river. He didn't return. There was hue and cry. Three days later the oarless boat, with a great hole stove in its bottom, was found floating in the harbor. Dana was never heard of again. Of course, Dana had rowed a few rods into the darkness and was then transferred to a boat which Aunt Hannah had waiting for him. Then something unforeseen happened. The United States declared war on Germany. As far as Diana was concerned, Dana's presence in New York was only a danger. Aunt Hannah was handling the case with her usual resourcefulness. She sent him West, and there he enlisted under an assumed name. That left Diana alone in the great, gloomy house in the Eighties, although at intervals the Saturday-night message would flash to her the news in his letters to Aunt Hannah. Of course, her state of mind was perpetual panic. She was worried about her brother, and she knew perfectly well now that the Guirks meant to make way with her. But she trusted to Aunt Hannah, and her trust was justified. After Dana's disappearance the Guirks started what was, in fact, a campaign to disqualify Diana mentally. Whenever she sat alone in her room, Anstress would break in upon her. 'You mustn't let yourself get so sad; it's dangerous,' she would say, or, 'This moping leads to melancholia and thoughts of death and suicide,' or, 'If you think too much of Dana you'll get so low-spirited that you'll want to kill yourself.' She harped all the time on Diana's growing sadness, her suicidal tendency. She warned the servants that Diana was in a state of dangerous melancholia. She never left the house without asking them to watch her. This was, of course, to prepare them all for the moment when Diana's body would be found in the river. Diana knew, and Aunt Hannah knew, that her doom was approaching. But how to get away?

"In the mean time Aunt Anstress decided to make the gym over into an up-stairs living-room. That gave her an opportunity to gratify her one extravagance—the accumulation of rugs. Suddenly, one night, a plan of escape flashed into Diana's mind. It was suggested—" Here Kerry smiled. "Now I'm plagiarizing you."

"Steal my stuff as much as you want," Fax prompted cheerfully.

"Her escape was suggested by the picture which hung beside her bed—'Cleopatra and Cæsar.' She outlined the scheme in a letter, and for the second time employed the hot-water-bottle post.

"Aunt Hannah's boat came, took her message. Aunt Hannah indicated her approval and her additions to Kerry's plan by means of the electric sign. Aunt Hannah approached Coney, Smyrniande's truck-driver, bribed him to help her. The rest is your story. I cannot better it. Diana was carried down-stairs in a pile of rugs and put into the delivery-motor. In that motor was a bag containing a fresh suit and a long letter of directions from Aunt Hannah. She changed there. At some distant spot—I imagine the delivery-yard of Smyrniande's store—unseen by anybody, she dropped out of the motor and joined Aunt Hannah."

"Heavens, how I'd like to write that story!" Fax crowed. "But where did Aunt Hannah live and what has Diana been doing all this time? Imagine some more, my fair Scheherezade."

"In Aunt Hannah's letter, she told Diana to go first to the Grand Central Station, emerge again in one of the train-crowds, take a taxi as though she had just come into New York on the train. Then, arriving at Aunt Hannah's house, and followed in a few hours by a trunkful of clothes, which Aunt Hannah had picked out for her, she was to pose as a young girl fresh from the country. By means of the electric sign, they had made the agreement—she and Aunt Hannah—that they would never say a word, even when they were alone, about the Guirks or the conditions of Diana's life with them until Diana Darnston's twenty-first birthday came. Their talk was always to be as though Diana had just come from

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the country; even, I reiterate, when they were alone, always, *always!* As a blind, Aunt Hannah had, all these years, been keeping a boarding-house. She had prepared the boarders for the coming of her niece—she had even shown them pictures of her—the pictures that Dana took with Lawrence Mangan's camera."

Fax emitted a deep suspiration. Long ago he had smoked his cigarette out. Now he seemed for the first instant conscious of it. He began slapping the pockets of his coat to find his cigarettes. One hand explored his trousers pocket. Apparently it didn't find the cigarette-case, but it touched something unexpected. With a puzzled air Fax drew it forth—a crumpled sheet of paper. Half unnoting, he opened it—started—stared—turned white—turned a deep red.

"It's one minute to twelve," Kerry faltered, "and I am——"

"*You are Diana Darnston!*" Fax anticipated her.

"How did you know?"

Fax handed her the paper. It was the note that she had thrown, tied to the tennis-ball, into the garden, accepting the Golden Serpent's invitation to join them.

"Oh! Oh! How stupid of me! It's the only bit of handwriting I've done since I left the Guirks, and I'd forgotten all about it. Of course there's hundreds of reproductions of my handwriting in the papers."

"It's remained in the pocket where I shoved it ever since that night," Fax said in a dead voice. "And I called myself a reporter!" He emitted a short, bitter laugh. "And I thought I had intuitions!"

"Love makes and unmakes intuition," Kerry breathed softly.

"Love!" Fax laughed again with a bitter mirthlessness. "And I have been writing daily love-letters to a girl with a fortune of twenty millions! Please consider them all unwritten, Miss Darnston."

But to this Diana, or Kerry, or Cendrillon paid no attention. Above them, the church clock was bombarding the air with the twelve strokes of midnight. And Diana, with a look of expectation, was staring in the direction of her oriel. With the last stroke of twelve a man's head appeared there, leaned out and surveyed the garden. Kerry waved her hand to him. The head disappeared instantly from its oval.

"Twenty million dollars can be given to that new world," Kerry whispered, addressing no one in particular. Fax took no notice. He stared into space.

The others came pouring out of the house—Mrs. Deane with the gleam of triumphant happiness in her eyes, Miss Ryan with the sparkle of triumphant success in hers.

"We have talked so long," Elsie Lennore said, "that we are all hungry again. Wong's getting us something delicious to eat. All the dinners have been your dinners, Cendrillon, and this shall be your supper."

"Breakfast, rather," Diana corrected, "and a birthday breakfast at that. For this is my birthday. I am twenty-one years old—and I am Diana Darnston!"

AN INTERVAL of stupefaction and then a volley of shrill hysterical ejaculations, questions, unheeded answers, demands for explanations. Diana it was who resolved it from its clamor to the quiet of another period of paralysis. For presently there came through the garden gate a young man in the uniform of a private in the United States army, four gold stripes on his right arm and the red band of demobilization on his left.

"This is my brother, Dana Darnston," Diana announced, and she threw her arms about her twin, "lately demobilized from the United States army and hiding in Hoboken since, while waiting for this night."

After her kiss, her head dropped for a long moment onto his shoulder. Dana's lids fell over something that glittered between his lashes.

"Aunt Hannah said you were in your room," he explained, "and sent me up there. You weren't there, but I looked out of the window—" He patted his sister's drooped head. After a while,

"Dana dear, this is Elsie Lennore, the great—" Diana began, turning eyes full of a dewy shining on her godmother.

"Do you think you can tell any doughboy about Elsie Lennore?" Dana jeered. "I've come home to marry you, Miss Lennore."

"I accept," said Elsie Lennore.

"And Mr. and Mrs. Harrideane, Dana, and Miss Ryan and Mr. Macgill. And Dana dear, this is the gentleman I am engaged to marry. Excuse me, Fax, for introducing you this way. But I don't know your name yet."

Everybody's Magazine, June, 1923

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Life

A Striking Bit of Drama That Grows Out of a Convict's Loyalty to a Four-footed Friend

By Edward Bellamy Partridge

BLACKBURN shook his head.

"No—nothing to say—except that I—I never harmed a man in my life——"

The court was very stern.

"You have had a fair and impartial trial; you have been given every opportunity to clear yourself, and you have been found guilty. You must not think that I have lost sight of the fact that the jury has recommended clemency. No doubt this recommendation was the result of your plea that you were not accustomed to drinking and had no recollection of anything that occurred after partaking of what you have admitted was a very liberal drink of very bad liquor. But the jury has failed to take into account the fact that no case stands by itself, that killings of this kind are becoming altogether too common. It is therefore the sentence of this court that you be confined in the state prison at San Quentin for and during the term of your natural life."

Blackburn slowly raised his hand to his head—a hand that but for the calluses on it might have been the hand of a gentleman, and a head that but for the fact that it was on the shoulders of a vagabond might have been the head of a scholar—and went on to answer the questions which a bored clerk was already droning at him. Forty-two years old. American-born. No occupation. Never previously convicted. No known relatives. And one or two other things. And then he was led back to his cell.

Life! He had expected nothing else. And yet, when the sentence came, it was something of a shock to him. Not so much on his own account, he kept telling himself, as on account of other things. For instance, there was Bard, his dog. What would become of Bard? Bard was the one creature in all the world that would miss him—the one creature in all the world that he would miss. What would become of Bard?

Blackburn had often wondered what would have happened to him if he had not sent Bard home on the fateful night when he had drunk the bootleg liquor. He remembered that Bard, usually so obedient, had been reluctant to go. He could see Bard now as he had started, and then had stopped and looked back over his shoulder in silent remonstrance, only to go on again in answer to an impatient wave from Blackburn's hand. He felt sure that Bard had been waiting for him during these months. He liked to think of Bard as playing round on the sunny slopes of Telegraph Hill, chasing butterflies and helping the boys of the neighborhood to dig out a rat or a gopher—and yet he knew that Bard was getting too old to chase butterflies and that he was a little too set in his ways to cooperate well with a gang of boys. And all the time he was haunted by the fear that his old partner was not getting enough to eat and was sleeping out in the rain and the fog. Life! You could not shut up any man for life without causing suffering somewhere on the outside——

The sound of footsteps in the corridor told him that the keeper was coming. He pulled himself together and stood up.

The keeper stopped at his door.

"You'll be leavin' here in a couple of days," he said gruffly, "and we might as well be breakin' in another trusty to take

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your place. Go get your mop and pail while I unlock the sailor, and then you can show him how to clean things up around here."

SO THE sailor was to take his place! Blackburn was glad of that. It was something of a privilege to have the freedom of the corridor even for the purpose of keeping it clean. He rather liked the sailor. In a way, he felt that the sailor was the only friend he had among all the men of the tier. But it was a curious friendship based on nothing in the world but mop-strings. It had begun on the day when he had first been made a trusty and set at mopping the corridor. All the other prisoners, as he had come splashing up to their doors, had drawn back into their cells until he had passed. The sailor, however, had caught hold of the mop through the grating and had pulled a few strings out of it. And as Blackburn had gone on with his work, he had fancied the sailor tying and untying knots in those strings, and doing other things with them that only sailors know how to do. The next time he had mopped, he had purposely tarried in front of the sailor's cell, scrubbing long at an imaginary grease spot, and he had been gratified to see several more of his mop-strings disappearing through the grating. Nothing had ever been said about it, but Blackburn felt that a bond had been established, and after that he always mopped with more than ordinary care in front of the sailor's cell. And now the sailor was going to do his own mopping.

The sailor took readily to the new work, splashing on the water and scrubbing with a will. And Blackburn was amused at the pains with which he cleaned beneath and behind the radiator at the end of the row. He wondered whether he himself had not taken the same pains when he was new at the job, and concluded that he probably had. He realized that same night that he hadn't, however, when he saw the new trusty remove from behind the radiator a steam-pipe that he had succeeded in loosening, and use it as a lever to bend out the bars at one of the windows. This bar-bending had struck Blackburn as a rather useless proceeding until suddenly the mop-strings had come to light in the form of a rope. The sailor had motioned to him to follow and had squeezed through the opening. He had followed, and close behind the sailor had let himself down from window to window until at last he had reached the ground. As his feet touched the earth, his heart gave a great leap; he was free!

But with the realization that he was free had come the knowledge that he was in a narrow alley at the rear of the jail—and that he was on his own. The sailor, who had been the first to go down, was nowhere to be seen. A feeling of helplessness swept over Blackburn; he did not know San Francisco well, and had no idea which way to go. The chance to escape had come to him so unexpectedly that he was not at all ready for it. Not that he would have been able to have friends or money waiting for him on the outside in any case, but that, at least, he would have had a plan. It came to him that it wouldn't have hurt the sailor any to let him see which way he went —and yet he realized that he had no claim to any further help from the sailor; the use of the rope had certainly made up for his help with the mop-strings. But where was he going to get a hat and some clothes to cover up those prison denims?

A distant clock struck eight. The sound roused him to the necessity for action. He made his way cautiously to the end of the alley and peered out into the dimly lighted street. Some shrubbery in a square a little distance up the street caught his eye. He had lived all his life in the country, and his idea of hiding was to get into the bushes; and in the back of his mind there was a half-formed idea that if he could only conceal himself in the bushes somewhere, Bard would be sure to come to him. He had not yet nerved himself up to the point of making a start, however, when some one touched his arm. He was frozen with terror until he could make himself understand that it was nobody but the sailor.

"Been over to the other end," whispered the sailor. "Thought maybe the girls'd meet me there with a car and some duds, but I guess they didn't get my message. We can't wait, though. We got to beat it."

"Th-there's s-some bushes up the street," stammered Blackburn. "We might hide there until later."

"Hide," muttered the sailor. "We don't want to *hide*. What we want to do is get away from here before hell begins a-poppin'. That keeper ain't goin' to stay down at the other end all night."

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"B-but where'll we get h-hats and clothes?"

"We'll have to grab 'em wherever we can. We can't be waitin' here for the fairies to bring 'em to us." The sailor leaned out and peered up and down the street. "Now's our chance!" he hissed, and darted down the street. Blackburn followed.

They met nobody, and had almost reached Montgomery Street when they noticed quite a crowd of people ahead.

"Looks like street work of some kind," muttered the sailor, stepping into a doorway and pulling Blackburn after him. "Busted pipe or somep'n. They're all standin' round, lookin' at it."

"But we can't get through a crowd like that—" faltered Blackburn.

"The hell we can't—unless we want to stay here and get nabbed without even makin' a try!"

"If we only had hats!"

"We got to take *some* chances, you know—but we better go one at a time. I'll go first. You wait till I reach the other side before you start—and whatever else you do, don't hurry. Take it easy." And the sailor was off.

BLACKBURN hated to be left behind, but he would have hated just as much to have gone ahead. Either way it would have seemed to him that the thing wasn't quite fair. He couldn't help admiring the slow, almost casual gait at which his companion was moving down the street, however, and his admiration grew when he saw the sailor pick up a shovel that lay by the curb and carry it into the street, where he mingled for a moment with the workmen. Then Blackburn saw him emerge and walk slowly over to a truck on which a number of coats and hats and dinner-pails had been left, and, after helping himself to a hat and coat, saunter slowly off down the street. Just to watch the sailor had unnerved him, and he had to set his jaws to keep his teeth from chattering as he started out for himself.

But circumstances did not play into his hands as they had for the sailor. There was no stray shovel lying near the curb for him to pick up. And when he attempted to mingle with the workmen, he was roughly shoved back by somebody who told him to get out of there. This confused and disconcerted him. And in spite of the sailor's parting injunction to take it easy, he lost his head and made a leap for the truck, snatched a hat and coat and dashed off down the street at full speed.

The cry of "Stop thief!" sounded in his ears before he had taken half a dozen strides, but he bolted on. His one idea was to reach a pile of vegetable-crates behind which the sailor had disappeared. But when he reached it and found that the sailor was not there, he paused for a moment like a frightened hare, and then, as the sound of pursuit came nearer, ran blindly down the street as fast as he could go. At the corner of an alley leading off to the left he found the sailor waiting for him, and with a feeling of the utmost relief followed wherever the sailor led. They ran rapidly along the alley, hopeful that their pursuers had not seen them turn into it; but they had not gone far before they realized that the chase was still on.

The threat of the heavy footfalls and the confusion of angry shouts struck terror to Blackburn's heart. A sinking feeling began to come over him—and then he heard the sailor say encouragingly,

"This way!"

A corner loomed up. He hurled himself round it, turning to the right, and a moment later followed the sailor into a narrow alley leading to the left. A short distance farther on they turned again to the right, and then slowed down to a walk as they approached a street-lamp.

"Slow bell—" panted the sailor. "We've run far enough. What'd you want to run for in the first place? Nobody'd 'a' chased you if you hadn't——"

Blackburn, breathing heavily, nodded his head regretfully.

"This is Gold Street," the sailor panted on. "We're goin' to turn into Sansome and go toward North Beach—and if we meet anybody, remember we're a couple of seafarin' men out for a little spree. Get me?"

Again Blackburn nodded, and together they stepped out into Sansome Street. Nobody was in sight save one lone pedestrian on the other side of the street. A truck rumbled by, shutting out for the moment all sound of pursuit. When it had passed, however, their pursuers seemed to have come alarmingly nearer. Blackburn thought the ambling pace of his companion

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entirely too slow and was about to remonstrate with him when the sailor seized him by the arm, and at almost the same moment reeled back and forth as he burst hoarsely into song.

Then Blackburn caught sight of a policeman standing in a doorway watching them, and began to do a little reeling on his own account. He, too, burst into song—a wordless, incoherent song—but for the next half-block he expected to feel the heavy hand of the law descending upon his shoulder. Then the first of the pursuers came bursting into Sansome Street.

"There they go!" he heard somebody shout.

"Where? Which way?"

"Down there!" And then the sound of running again.

He felt the sailor's grasp tighten on his arm.

"Don't try to make another break!" came to him through set jaws. "If you do, we're goners." And he went on with his chantey.

EVERY nerve in Blackburn's body told him that he ought to be in flight; but he knew that he never could break the iron grip in which the sailor was holding him—that is, unless he could land a blow on him that would stun him. He began to consider whether it would be better to strike him in the face or in the belly. He did not stop to consider that but for the sailor he would still be in jail. A remarkable change had come over him. As long as he was in jail, his will was like putty—he was obedient and submissive; he never even thought of escaping. But once on the outside, a free man again, his will ran away with him. He meant to stay free, and was ready to fight to the last drop of his blood with any one who sought to cross his path to freedom. He had just about decided that the best thing to do was to whirl and strike the sailor in the face with his fist with all his strength and then, if necessary, to kick him into submission when he heard a heavy voice which, he felt sure, must be that of the policeman saying:

"Hold on there! What's up?"

The running stopped.

"We're after a thief!"

"Two of 'em!" a voice corrected. "We've chased 'em all the way from Montgomery and Washington——"

"Well, you're barkin' up the wrong tree," came the voice of the officer again. "Nobody's passed here but a couple of stewed sailors that couldn't run to save their lives."

Blackburn's muscles relaxed. A guilty feeling stole over him. He had almost turned traitor to the man who had liberated him. He realized now that if he had attacked the sailor as he had intended, they would probably both have been recaptured. He was glad that the policeman had spoken just when he did. That was all that had saved him from a terrible piece of disloyalty. After this, he would let the sailor have his own way. And they went reeling on.

A little distance farther along they came to the ruins of a large building that had gone down in the fire and earthquake of some years before. The place looked to Blackburn like a good hiding-place; but after what had just happened he had no suggestions to offer. The sailor, however, also liked the looks of the place.

"We'll put in here and rest up a bit," he said. "It won't do no harm to talk things over and lay our next course."

They felt their way in among the mounds of débris and rubbish, and at length crouched down in the angle of a crumbling wall where they were out of sight from the street and shielded from the raw wind which was beginning to bring in a dripping night fog. Blackburn noticed with a thrill the reflection of the city lights on the low-hanging clouds. He had forgotten that there were such things.

"If there's a boat that's goin' out tonight, we want to be on her," muttered the sailor. "There's a place down here a piece where I can find out what's what——"

"But you forget that I'm not a sailor," Blackburn reminded him.

"Well, you can peel spuds, can't you?"

"Oh, yes; I can do that."

"All right, then. I'll go down here and find out what's what, and then I'll come back and tell you."

"It would save you the trouble of coming back if I should go right along with you," suggested Blackburn.

"I better go alone—it's safer."

"Well—how long will you be gone?"

"Not long. 'Tain't far."

"Don't stay any longer than you can help."

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The sailor stood up and gave a tug at his trousers.

"If I ain't back inside of an hour—why, you'll know it's because I can't get back." And he disappeared into the darkness.

Blackburn sat motionless until he could no longer hear the sound of the sailor's footsteps. Then he settled himself back against the wall a little more comfortably. He didn't like being left alone like this. What if the sailor couldn't get back? What would he do? Which way would he go? The sound of an engine shunting freight-cars about the yards off toward the water-front floated up to him. He supposed he could jump a freight train if he could get to wherever they were. Where was he, anyway? In his haste to escape from that yelling mob he had lost his bearings entirely.

He stood up and looked round. Market Street must be off in the direction of that glare. To his left must be the bay; and to his right he could see the dim outlines of buildings scrambling up the side of a steep hill, pierced here and there by the light from a window. Could this be—he turned farther around to the right—why, it was! Telegraph Hill! His heart gave a bound. He had been living in a shack on the other side of Telegraph Hill when the thing had happened. He had sent Bard home to the shack that night. Now—was he still waiting round there, or had he given up and gone away? It wouldn't take him long to find out. He wouldn't have to go near the shack itself; so there would be no danger if the police were watching it. Bard always knew when he was in the neighborhood—and if he should climb the hill and go as far as the gate of the old lookout station and Bard did not come to him, he would know that it was because the dog was nowhere around.

HE MADE his way cautiously through the ruins until he came to a street leading up the hill, and then he began to walk rapidly. As he went on, the hill became steeper and steeper. At length the street gave up as a highway, although the sidewalk went feebly on in the form of rickety steps for some yards farther, and then that, too, gave up. By the time that he had reached the top of the steps, Blackburn was breathing heavily, but he pushed on, feeling his way over the rough ground strewn with tin cans and broken crockery until at last he stood panting in the shadow of the old stone wall at the top. The lights of the city lay spread out before him. The glow on the fog seemed brighter than ever. The rumble of traffic floated up to him, torn now and then by the scream of an automobile horn. The hoarse blast of a ferry-boat called for the right of way. Bells jangled on a freighter anchored in the roadstead. Moved by the beauty of it all, he stood looking and listening and dreaming—until a sound nearer at hand brought him to himself. Something was coming over the hill and coming fast. He crouched down in the shadow and held out his arms—and a moment later, with a whimper that was almost a sob, Bard leaped into them.

Blackburn ran his hands over the dog and found him lean, almost emaciated.

"We've both been up against it, Bard," he whispered. "But I guess you've had a much harder time than I have. I've had a warm place to sleep, plenty to eat, and a roof over my head; but I never took a mouthful of food without wishing that I could give it to you—and when I would wake up and hear it raining in the night, I would always wonder where you were."

Bard wagged the tip of his tail as if to assure his master that, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, he was well able to take care of himself.

"But that's all over, Bard," he continued. "We'll never be separated again. But we must be getting down the hill. We don't want the sailor to come back and find us gone. We're going away on a boat, you know—I didn't tell you—far away."

Together they made their way back to the place where the sailor had left him. He was not there. And for the first time it came to Blackburn that perhaps the sailor had never intended to come back at all. It was a disturbing thought; he wished that it had not come to him. He told himself that the sailor was a decent fellow, that if he hadn't felt that he was under a certain amount of obligation to Blackburn for those mop-strings, he would never have given him the opportunity of going with him and using the rope. Of course he was too decent to stoop to any such petty trick as asking him to wait when he didn't intend to come back. Then

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it occurred to him that while the sailor might have felt that way in the first place, he might have changed his mind after the awful blunders that Blackburn had made. Another thing that bothered him was the thought that the sailor would find it much harder to smuggle two persons on board ship than only one. And perhaps he had been able to find only a place for a sailor—that there were no openings for spud-peelers.

AS THE time went on he found himself getting more and more uneasy, and tried to convince himself that he thought the sailor had been gone a great deal longer than he really had—that his excitement over finding Bard had made him lose track of the time. His better judgment was not entirely satisfied with this reasoning, however, and kept reminding him that the darkness would not last forever and that the chance of his getting out of the city by daylight was very, very remote. He met this with the argument that getting out of the city by his own unaided efforts would be equally difficult by night or day—and he waited on.

At last a distant clock struck eleven. He realized that it was folly to wait any longer, that he really must be starting out for himself. He thought that if he should skirt the water-front and keep going south he would eventually get somewhere. His coat and hat would act as something of a disguise, and possibly the dog would help to throw people off the track. It had always seemed to him that a dog gave a man a certain air of establishment and domesticity. He laid his hand on the back of Bard's neck and was surprised to feel the hair come bristling up. A moment later he was relieved to hear a low growl.

"It's all right, Bard," he whispered.

But Bard sniffed disapprovingly. After a little came the sound of footsteps. Then,

"Where the hell you gone to?"

"Here!" answered Blackburn. "This way! Right where you left us."

The sailor came nearer, and just as he had put out his hand to touch Blackburn's arm he was startled half out of his wits by a savage yelp from Bard. He had stepped on the dog's foot. And Bard, who had always before been willing to accept an apology in a case of this kind, was for following the thing up and exacting revenge.

Blackburn hastily assumed the rôle of peacemaker.

"It's my old dog," he explained. "You must have stepped on his toe. We found each other while you were gone. But what about a boat?"

"Tell you all about that in a minute. You drive that damn dog away first. I don't like dogs."

"You'll like *this* dog—when you get acquainted," Blackburn hastened to assure him.

"I don't like *no* dog—" the sailor began in an ugly tone.

But Blackburn, who did not wish him to commit himself too definitely on this point, interrupted him with:

"You stayed away a long time."

"I was damn lucky to get back at all. They're after us red-hot—motor-cycles, mounted cops, everything."

Blackburn swallowed once or twice.

"Got it all fixed up, though," the sailor went on. "The *Derby Castle* goes out at midnight. She's an ole wind-jammer, but that's all the better—no wireless or nuthin'; and when she touches Sydney sixty or eighty days from now, you and me'll be all forgot."

"Yes; but how'll we get on board?"

"That's easy!" replied the sailor a bit boastfully. "Mate's a friend of mine. He'll get us on board. He's fixin' up some papers for us now."

Blackburn drew a long breath.

"Well, Bard," he said, as he stroked the dog's head, "I guess we'll both be glad when we get on that boat——"

"What's that—who?" demanded the sailor.

"I was just talking to the dog."

"Aw, hell!" muttered the sailor. "You can't take that dog along. We'll have trouble enough gettin' there ourselves." And he bent over and began to feel round on the ground with his hands.

"What's the matter—drop something?" asked Blackburn.

"No—but I'm tryin' to find a rock or somep'n to kill that cur with. We don't want no dog taggin' along behind to give us away."

"You don't—you don't need any rock," faltered Blackburn. "He'll go back if I tell him to—but I—I don't feel as if I *could* go away and leave him."

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"What does a dog amount to?" growled the sailor disdainfully. "I wouldn't have one of the damn things around; they're worse luck than a hunchback or a cross-eyed cook. The skipper wouldn't let a dog *look* at his boat. Give him a swift kick and come on." And he started along.

Blackburn stood up. He looked at the dark bulk of the sailor disappearing, then turned his eyes toward the glow in the sky over the heart of the city. He thought of the jail, of the dulness of his soul while he was a prisoner there, and of the leap his spirit had given when his feet touched the free earth. Then his mind jumped to the chase. He seemed to hear again the haunting footfalls, the ugly cries, to feel again the sickening horror of being hunted. He felt Bard's nose burrowing confidently into his hand—but withdrew his hand and started for the doorway.

"You're—you're sure there's no—no chance for the dog?"

"Naw! How many times have I got to tell you?" growled the sailor.

"Then—then don't wait for me," said Blackburn jerkily. "You go ahead. I'm not coming. You—you know I told you I wasn't a sailor——"

The sailor came back.

"Don't make a damn fool of yourself," he muttered. "They'll catch you dead sure."

"I'll have to risk that."

"My God, man, have you forgot what's comin' to you if they ever get you again?"

"Life——"

"And you're goin' to take the chances on that just for a worthless cur?"

"I don't know as I'd put it that way—but I've decided not to go."

A sneer. A curse. Stumbling footsteps growing less and less distinct until finally they were lost in the distant noises of the night—and Blackburn was left alone with his dog.

Most important in a popular story is suspense. You must be made to want to know what is going to happen. Every line must hold your interest and at the same time make you more and more eager. You will have a chance to read that kind of story in "THOROUGHBRED," by Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, author of "*Swallowed Up*," which begins in July *Everybody's*, out June 15th

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Spring Tonic

Prescribed for Those Who Spend Their Time Mostly Patting Their Stomachs and Scowling—the Dose to Be Determined by Their Long-Suffering Friends

By T. L. Sappington

Illustration by Ernest Fuhr

WHEN springtime came to Valley Green, all the gentlemen in the little suburb with the exception of Mr. Emory Potter dropped whatever they were doing and lit out for the links, where they golfed, and golfed, and golfed until they were as sunburned and hungry and healthy as the dickens. It is a pity that Mr. Potter did not go with them. But, no; Mr. Potter's springtime fancies were but few. In fact, they were but two—his law-office and a good spring tonic.

For years and years Mr. Potter's insides had acted as though a spark-plug were missing. Sometimes it even seemed as though a monkey-wrench had fallen into the works. By spring, after a hard winter at the office, he generally felt as though he wouldn't pull through the summer if he didn't get a bracer of some sort. Hence his craving for a seasonable tonic.

One beautiful morning in May, Mr. Potter emerged from the doorway of his attractive place at Valley Green and stared gloomily across the lawn. Though the trees were budding and the birds singing, Mr. Potter was hopelessly unresponsive. All he did was to pat his stomach and scowl.

"I knew it! I knew it!" grumbled Mr. Potter. "I knew I'd pay up for it! Whatever possessed me to eat those hot biscuits for breakfast I can't imagine."

"Nonsense!" retorted Mrs. Potter, a plump, comfortable-looking lady in a beribboned house gown, who had followed him to the veranda. "Eliza's biscuits wouldn't hurt a baby. Really, Emory, if you keep on you won't be able to eat anything. I did think after you bought a car and motored to town instead of using the train, you'd be different, but you're not. However, what can you expect when you spend every spare minute in that stuffy old law-office?"

"The stuffy old law-office has nothing to do with it," countered Mr. Potter. "If everything agreed with me as well as the law, I'd be happy. And I don't care what you say about Eliza's biscuits. I will *not* eat them again."

"No one made you eat them."

"I know," grunted Mr. Potter. "But you put them on the table, didn't you? What I need, I guess, is a good spring tonic. Well, I must hurry. Have to meet Van Ness this morning."

Hastily he bent and kissed Mrs. Potter, then hurried down the walk to his car. As he stood at the curb, pulling on his driving-gloves, Morrison's bakery wagon clattered by, followed, as usual, by Morrison's big collie. At the same moment Priscilla, the Persian cat belonging to Mr. Potter's next-door neighbor, Mrs. Carew, came out on the sidewalk to stalk a robin.

Morrison's collie, chock-full of the spirit of spring, caught sight of her. Two minutes later a white streak pursued by a brown streak circled about Mr. Potter with bewildering rapidity, winding up with the white streak ascending Mr. Potter's maple and the brown streak making frantic leaps in an endeavor to reach its prey. All of

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which, added to the hot biscuits he had consumed, made Mr. Potter's internal mechanism fairly tremble. He turned on the dog in a fury.

"Get out!" he bellowed, kicking at the animal. "Clear off!"

The collie, rather astonished at Mr. Potter's lack of sporting blood, backed away a few feet, stood panting and wagging his tail a moment, then fled up the street after his master's wagon.

"Confounded brutes!" snarled Mr. Potter, glaring up at Priscilla as he climbed into his car. "What anybody wants to keep animals for beats me!"

Perhaps Mr. Potter might not have been so irritated had it not been for the appointment with Mr. Van Ness. When Mr. Van Ness named nine o'clock for a meeting, he meant nine o'clock. Mr. Potter, already late, had lost a good ten minutes more through the cat-and-dog episode. That meant he would have to drive fast, and *that* meant he would be on edge all the way to town.

MR. POTTER was a tall, slim, rather somber gentleman of forty-odd. An expert in certain phases of the law, he occupied a position of considerable importance in the offices of the well-known firm of Lukens, Lukens & Lukens. Some of the firm's clients would have no one but Mr. Potter handle their affairs.

Mr. Van Ness, a power in the mining world and the possessor of large wealth, was particularly biased in that direction. Mr. Potter had in one instance secured a verdict for him where other mining attorneys had battled in vain. As a consequence, when Mr. Van Ness visited the offices of Lukens, Lukens & Lukens, he always made straight for Mr. Potter's room.

Mr. Potter, wrestling with the biscuits he had had for breakfast, and pushing his car to the limit, finally reached the office a quarter of an hour ahead of his client. But his face must have shown signs of the struggle he had been through, for when at last Mr. Van Ness rose from his chair by Mr. Potter's desk, he hesitated.

"Look here, Potter," he said; "how would you like to take a run out to the farm with me? It's a beautiful day." Mr. Van Ness was a big man, his face ruddy with much outdoor living. Having plenty of money, he went in for fancy farming, and his stock farm was his hobby. "Come along," he said. "You look sort of peaked. It will do you good. I'll have you back before luncheon. If you don't get out of this musty old legal atmosphere now and then, you'll dry up. Get out and let the wind blow on you. That's the way to keep young, Potter. Coming?"

Mr. Potter coughed. It didn't suit him at all to take the morning off, and he didn't care in the least for farms, especially stock farms. As you know, animals had no attraction for Mr. Potter. On the other hand, he was extremely fond of the musty old law business. As for going out when the wind was blowing, he detested it. It invariably gave him neuralgia.

However, Mr. Van Ness was the client of clients, and business was business. So, as stated, Mr. Potter coughed, then told Mr. Van Ness he would be delighted to go, that he'd heard so much about the farm he was eager to see it, *et cetera* and so on. All of which made the recording angel dip his pen in his ink hurriedly and write like mad.

"Well," said Mr. Van Ness to Mr. Potter about an hour later, "now that you've seen my Jerseys and my horses and my chickens, I'm going to show you my kennels. How are you on dogs—eh?"

"Dogs?" said Mr. Potter. "Well, it depends. I like some kinds better than others. I can't say I care much for collies."

"I don't care so much for collies myself," rejoined Mr. Van Ness. "But Airedales are different. I'm strong for Airedales. I've got a litter of five here—pure-blooded English Airedales."

He lifted the gate of the wire enclosure by which they were standing, and out swarmed the puppies in question. Shaggy, tousled-looking little things they were, with bright, inquiring brown eyes and small ears cocked forward. With shrill barks, their short tails wagging furiously, they wriggled about Mr. Potter's feet and worried the end of his trousers in high glee.

"Aren't they beauties?" inquired Mr. Van Ness, his eyes laughing as he watched his guest shift uneasily this way and that, lifting his feet high now and then to avoid an overeager animal. "Look at the cut of their jaws! Why, in a year or so, if one of those dogs got a grip on you—good-night! I say—aren't they beauties?"

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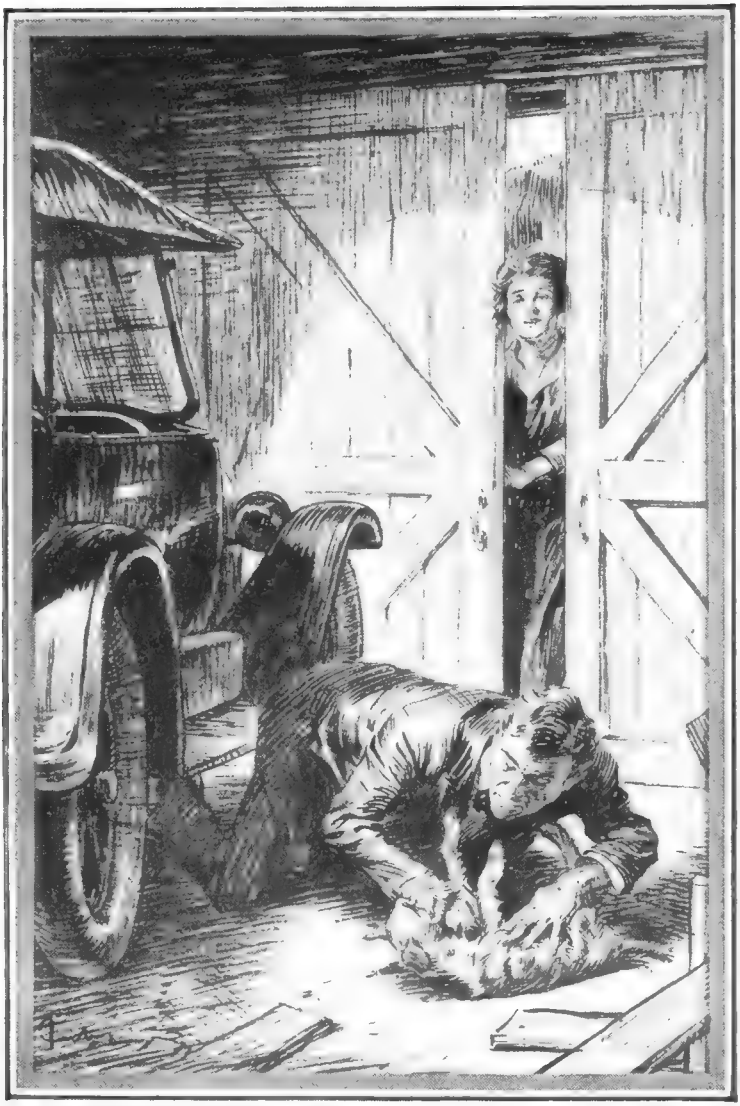

By a prodigious effort Mr. Potter managed to corner Bob, and then, by throwing himself flat on top of the animal and nearly crushing him, got him into his arms.

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"Perfectly—ah—wonderful!" responded Mr. Potter, still moving about restlessly. "I—I never saw finer creatures in my life." Mr. Potter felt it was up to him to show enthusiasm; so he did his best. "I—I—'pon my word I envy you! It—it—really it makes me wish I had one of my own."

Mr. Van Ness chuckled. Then he clapped Mr. Potter on the back.

"Gad, man!" he said. "I never imagined you fancied dogs that much. I don't know why, but I always had the idea you never cared much about them. But now—I know what I'll do. I'll present you with one. Take your pick. How about that fat little chap chewing your shoe-lace? His name is Bob."

A chill swept over Mr. Potter. A startled look came into his eyes. His face went brick-red all of a sudden. When he spoke, he seemed to be short of breath.

"Oh, really, Mr. Van Ness, I couldn't think of it. It's too much! Take one of your prize-winners? No, no! Thank you a thousand times, but, really, I couldn't."

"Get out!" responded Mr. Van Ness. "Of course you can! I *want* you to have one of them. I'll give you Bob. I'll send him to your place to-morrow. I've always wanted to make you a present, Potter, since you won that mineral-separations case for me."

In vain Mr. Potter protested. Mr. Van Ness was adamant.

"No; you take the dog and see what you can do with him. Let me know how he turns out. And now, let's move along; I want to show you my hogs."

Mr. Potter groaned inwardly. What could he do? He could do nothing. Mr. Van Ness was a client to be humored. Wondering vaguely what Mrs. Potter would think of it all, Mr. Potter disentangled his feet from the eager clutches of the puppies and followed his host.

LATE the next afternoon, as Mr. Potter backed his car into the garage on his arrival home from the office, Mrs. Potter came forth from the house to greet him.

"Well, the dog is here. Eliza has him in the kitchen. We thought it best not to open the crate until you came—he—he seems so lively."

"I'll bet he is!" said Mr. Potter, scowling. "I never saw a pup yet that wasn't lively. Well, let him stay in the crate. I'm in no hurry to have him out. I'll have my dinner first, anyway."

Mr. Potter's ill humor was no surprise to his wife. The night before, as they prepared for bed, they had discussed the question of Bob's advent thoroughly. And now, as they sat at the table, Mrs. Potter resumed the discussion.

"What I can't understand is why under the sun you told him you wished you had a dog like this for your own, when you didn't wish anything of the kind."

As Mrs. Potter had made the same observation at least three times the night before, Mr. Potter, being more or less of a gentleman, had to count ten carefully before he ventured to reply.

"As I've already mentioned," he said, "I told him what I told him because there was nothing else to tell him. It's remarkably strange you can't understand. It was simply the conventional admiration one expresses for another's possessions. I never dreamed of his giving me one of the dogs."

Mrs. Potter sighed.

"I see. Well, I guess we're in for it, Emory. No doubt we'll get used to having a dog by and by."

"I won't!" said Mr. Potter.

Dinner over, Mr. Potter lit his pipe and walked into the kitchen to survey his new possession. He had to admit the pup was a cute-looking little rascal, and, after a moment's hesitation, reached through the slats and gave him a pat, which sent Bob into a spasm of delight.

Eliza, passing to and fro with the dishes from the dining-room, chuckled audibly.

"Dat dog shuah gwine wake dis place up," she remarked.

"He'll not wake me up," said Mr. Potter. "I shall keep him in the garage."

"Huh!" sniffed Eliza, big and black as the range she cooked at. "Dat won't stop him. I know pups. Ain't I raised 'em?"

"Is that so?" remarked Mr. Potter. "Well, I wish with all my heart, Eliza, you had the raising of this one."

Mr. Potter's garage, which had been part of the property when he bought his house, was a two-car affair. As he had but one machine, there was ample space to house one dog or a dozen, and Mr. Potter proceeded to utilize it. When bedtime came he secured a soap-box from the cellar and half filled it with excelsior, after which he wrenched off

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the slats of Bob's prison, dragged forth Mr. Van Ness's present, carried him to the garage and inserted him in the soap-box, which he had placed well back from the door. Having done that, Mr. Potter turned about to seek his own couch, but before he reached the entrance to the garage, Bob was at his heels.

"Go back!" commanded Mr. Potter sternly. "Go back to your box, sir!"

Bob's response was a bark and a series of figure eights about Mr. Potter.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Mr. Potter. "Now what am I to do?"

Finally he snatched up the dog, carried him to the soap-box, dropped him into it, and then made a dash for the door, only to arrive there neck and neck with Bob.

"Back!" roared Mr. Potter, stamping his foot. "Back! Scat!"

Unfortunately the door of the garage was not one that could be opened and shut in an instant. It worked on rollers and moved slowly. Mr. Potter felt sure if he opened it wide enough to squeeze through, Bob would squeeze through also. The thought infuriated him. Was he never going to get through with this business and get to bed? He could hear Mrs. Potter calling to him. At last she came out to the garage.

"What *is* the matter, anyway?" she asked. "Why don't you open the door and come out?"

"You may be sure I *am* coming out," bawled Mr. Potter, "as soon as I can get out without bringing the dog with me. Listen; you'll have to help me." Opening the door the merest crack, he explained. "When I give the word," he said, "you throw the door wide enough for me to get through, and do it quick. Do you understand?"

Mrs. Potter said she did and, putting one eye to the crack, watched with interest as Mr. Potter once more essayed to capture Bob and tuck him into bed. But this time the dog proved to be a difficult quarry. He had no mind to retire if he could help it. In any event, he led Mr. Potter a pretty chase, zigzagging this way and that until his pursuer was dizzy. Mrs. Potter, highly diverted by the spectacle, opened the door wider and wider in her excitement.

"Shut it! Shut it!" shrieked Mr. Potter. "Do you want him to get out?"

So Mrs. Potter reluctantly narrowed the opening and waited for the signal to let Mr. Potter through—and presently it came.

By a prodigious effort Mr. Potter managed to corner Bob, and then, by throwing himself flat on top of the animal and nearly crushing him, got him into his arms.

"Now," said Mr. Potter, holding his squirming burden with difficulty as he came to the door, "I'm going to throw him as far as I can. Then you let me out before he can turn and come after me. See?"

"Cruel!" was Mrs. Potter's comment. "How would you like to have somebody throw you?"

"Cruel nothing!" retorted her husband. "Do you want to play round with this pup all night? You open the door as I tell you. I want to get to bed."

So the moment Mr. Potter, with a swing of his long arms, had sent the unfortunate Bob hurtling toward the soap-box, Mrs. Potter rolled back the door and Mr. Potter snapped off the light and slipped through.

"There!" he said, wiping his brow as he turned the key in the lock and led the way toward the house. "That's done, thank goodness!"

"You ought to have tied him," said Mrs. Potter.

Mr. Potter shook his head.

"You can't tie a pup. He'd choke himself. I know that much about them. No; now that he finds I mean business, he'll turn over and go to sleep. After a dog once understands——"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Potter. "What's that?"

A weird sound was coming from the garage, low and mournful. And before they had reached the kitchen door it had swelled into a crescendo of grief.

"Humph," remarked Mr. Potter, with a well-assumed tone of indifference, as he and Mrs. Potter entered the house. "He seems to be howling."

"I should think he was! I'm afraid the neighbors——"

"If we can stand it, I guess the neighbors can," snapped Mr. Potter. "And, anyway, he won't howl long. He must be tired after his journey. He'll drop off after a bit—you'll see."

HOWEVER, the only one who dropped off was Mrs. Potter, who, being somewhat deaf in one ear, promptly buried the

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other in the pillow and so was able to defy the disturbance.

As for Mr. Potter, he assumed every possible position in his bed that he could, short of standing on his head, in his efforts to drop off also. Then, after an hour's acrobatics, he got up, donned his dressing-gown and slippers and went out to the garage.

Inching the door open slightly, he spoke to Mr. Van Ness's present.

"Sh. Go to sleep in there," he whispered. " 'At's a good dog. Lie down, Bob! Down! That's the boy!"

Instantly the howling ceased, and whines of joy came through the crack to Mr. Potter. But when, after fifteen minutes' soothing conversation, he endeavored to slip away, the lamentations broke out worse than ever.

"My gosh!" exclaimed Mr. Potter, clutching at his hair.

In bed once more, he wearily resumed his gymnastics until, a bright thought coming to him, instead of putting his head on his pillow he put his pillow on his head, and finally, in a state of semisuffocation, lapsed into slumber.

THE next day dawned clear and beautiful. As Mr. Potter threw open the door of the garage and the sunshine poured in, out from his box scrambled Bob, as lively as a cricket.

Mr. Potter, his eyes heavy and his yawns frequent, gazed at him in amazement.

"Dog," he said, "you're a wonder! And heaven help those who haven't any good old office to go to, like I have."

That evening, on his return from town, Mr. Potter left his car for some minor repairs at the service garage near the station. As he turned in at his gate and came up the walk, he saw that Mrs. Potter was on the porch, knitting, with Bob sprawled quietly beside her. Mr. Potter's heart warmed at the peaceful sight. He had expected a scene of turmoil.

The next instant, however, the temperature of his heart dropped suddenly. With a yelp of welcome Bob leaped to his feet, hurled himself down the steps and raced to meet Mr. Potter like a fire-engine. Mr. Potter was appalled.

"Stop! Stop!" he shouted, doing his best to avoid the reception committee. He slapped at the dog with his newspaper. "Get down! Get down, I say!"

Back of him, in front of him, on both sides of him darted Bob. Mr. Potter pranced and danced, and at last kicked out so savagely he almost lost his balance, at which Mrs. Potter sprang to her feet and screamed. But by the time he had reached the porch, she was smiling.

"Good heavens, Sally! I don't see anything to laugh at," said Mr. Potter sulkily. He dropped into a rocker, then got up abruptly as Bob tried to scramble into his lap. "Look at my clothes! And I do believe he's licked half the blacking off my shoes. I hope I haven't got to go through this thing every evening."

"Oh, I guess not," said Mrs. Potter soothingly.

"You'll have to tie him up some way—that's all," said Mr. Potter.

"I did, but he choked himself just as you said, and he howled worse than he did last night. Oh, he's a problem, Emory. We've had quite a day with him."

At dinner, Mrs. Potter gave Mr. Potter further details.

"He's dug I don't know how many holes in the garden."

"Fast as I hung mah clothes on de line, he pulled 'em off," volunteered Eliza indignantly, as she served the fish. "Not only pulled 'em off but chewed 'em, too. 'Pears like he knowed I was fat and couldn't ketch him. Jus' sort o' straddled hisself and sniffed at me."

To his consternation, Mr. Potter suddenly felt a desire to chuckle, and almost swallowed a bone in his efforts to conquer the impulse.

"As for Mrs. Carew," went on Mrs. Potter, "she's furious. She says Bob squeezed through the hedge and chased her Priscilla up the rain-spout, and when Mrs. Carew tried to shoo him away, he chased her into the house."

"Of all the tales!" said Mr. Potter. "The idea of a baby of a dog like that chasing a grown woman into the house! I don't believe it."

"Well, that's what she said, and she said he wouldn't go away until Emma, her cook, came out and hit him with a broom."

"Hit him with a broom?" said Mr. Potter, bristling. "Say—that girl is getting too fresh! Why, he was only playing."

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Now, sleeping with a pillow over your head may appeal to some folks, but after Mr. Potter had tried it three or four nights it began to get on his nerves, and he decided that in some way or other the nocturnal howling must be suppressed—especially as the neighbors were talking of organizing a vigilance committee. But how to suppress it, short of choking or poisoning the source of the disturbance, Mr. Potter did not know. In answer to his inquiries he was told that some pups howl for months, while others howl only for weeks. In neither case did the information cheer Mr. Potter particularly.

So about one o'clock on the morning of the fifth day of Bob's arrival, he came to a sudden decision. He went out to the garage, jerked open the door, seized his pure-blooded English Airedale by the neck, marched back to his room and deposited the animal on the foot of his bed with a thump.

"You give just one howl now," he said, glaring at the animal balefully, "and I'll strangle you whether I lose Van's business or not."

But—goodness!—Bob hadn't the slightest intention of howling. All he wanted was company. So he curled down on the coverlet, and after listening a while to the music of Mr. Potter's snores, went off to sleep himself and never woke up until the birds outside the window began to chirp. Then, getting to his feet, he looked at Mr. Potter affectionately. Mr. Potter's mouth was open and his tousled head sunk deep in his pillow. He showed no signs of waking. So at last Bob scrambled over the hump his body made and licked his nose.

Mr. Potter woke with a yell. He leaped out of bed with two more yells. Then, when he saw Bob crouched in alarm against the foot-board, he sat down on the side of the bed and groaned.

Mrs. Potter, kimono-clad, came rushing in from her room, looking very much startled.

"What under the sun, Emory—" she began, then paused as Bob sprang to the floor and ran toward her. "How did that dog get here?"

"I brought him here last night," explained Mr. Potter sulkily. "It was the only way to shut him up. And then what does the beast do but get up at dawn and lick my nose."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Potter faintly. "Oh—oh dear!" After which she began to laugh, and seemed quite unable to stop. "I beg your pardon, Emory," she gasped at last; "but you and your—your alarm-clock dog are too funny!"

"Funny!" growled Mr. Potter. "Well, you bet your life he doesn't sleep here again."

But Mr. Potter was wrong. Bob did sleep there the next night and every night thereafter. Evidently Mr. Potter had failed to give the dog credit for the intelligence he possessed. If a mere matter of howling could secure Mr. Potter's companionship during the small hours of the night, to say nothing of the additional comforts of his chamber, why not howl? Therefore howl Bob did, and slept no more in the garage. And after Mr. Potter had cuffed him soundly on several occasions and he had learned that Mr. Potter's nose was not to be monkeyed with in the mornings, they got along very nicely together.

IT WAS the third week in April when Bob arrived at the Potter homestead. By the middle of May he was madly in love with Mr. Potter, and Mr. Potter, though nothing would have induced him to admit it, was not indifferent to Bob. And yet no pair could have been more dissimilar.

When Bob came across anything to eat, he ate it quickly, and that was all there was to it. Mr. Potter took nourishment in fear and trembling, and, after he had taken it, swallowed a pill in great haste and wished to thunder he hadn't eaten what he had.

But gradually he began to change. Instead of having Mrs. Carew's chauffeur spray the lawn, he came out after dinner and sprayed it himself. And when he did that, he and Bob had the time of their lives. Mr. Potter's one idea was to give Bob a drenching. Bob's one idea was to avoid it. It kept both of them moving lively.

Then, as the weather grew more enticing, Mr. Potter got in the habit of staying home Saturdays, when he and Bob would take long tramps together; and when they got back, maybe they weren't hungry. Of course that was nothing new for Bob, but it was for Mr. Potter. Indeed, it seemed to worry Mrs. Potter, and she told him several times that if he didn't look out he'd have another spell.

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"You know you can't eat cabbage, Emory," she said. "And you haven't touched pie for an age. What *has* got into you, anyway?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Potter; "but I do know this: I'm going to have pie, and I'm going to have cabbage and waffles and hot biscuits and any other darn thing I fancy. I haven't felt so well in years."

And, now that he mentioned it, Mrs. Potter could see that he did look entirely different from what he had when he visited Mr. Van Ness's farm. His face hadn't been round and sunburned then, and never, never had it known the wide sort of grin it wore when he and Bob played ball together or he hid from the dog behind a tree.

Heretofore, when the warmer season came, Mr. Potter used to sit on the porch with Mrs. Potter the entire evening. All the evening he used to sit there, smoking, smoking, smoking, but he didn't do it any more. In the first place, Bob wouldn't let him, and, in the second place, he didn't seem to care to.

No; Mr. Potter would smoke just one pipe as he glanced over the paper; then he'd throw down the sheet and give Bob a shove with his foot. And when the dog growled and made a jump for him, Mr. Potter would skip round behind Mrs. Potter and then off over the lawn, with Bob at his heels. One evening, after the pair of them, fairly worn out, came back to the porch and sat there panting, Mrs. Potter began to chuckle.

"Emory, you're crazy over that dog!"

"Ridiculous!" responded Mr. Potter, frowning. "It's only that *somebody* has to play with the beast."

"Now, now," said Mrs. Potter, her eyes twinkling, "be honest! You know you couldn't do without him. I never saw such a change in a man in my life. And to think that once you wouldn't have a dog within a mile of you!"

"I wouldn't have one now," retorted Mr. Potter, "if it hadn't been wished on me. If anybody but Van Ness had done the trick, I'd have sent Bob back long ago. You may think I enjoy all this capering, but it's largely done from a sense of duty. It isn't the dog's fault that he has to live with an old bird like me, so I try to give him a square deal. See?"

"Yes; I see," replied Mrs. Potter, coughing behind her hand. "Well, anyhow, Bob is as good a spring tonic as *you* ever struck. For one thing, he's taken you away from that old law-office, and I hope we never, never have to part with him."

"Speak for yourself," mumbled Mr. Potter. "It takes more than a dog to make *my* world go round."

THE following Sunday it rained and rained and rained. Mr. Potter and Bob and the Sunday papers occupied the chairs on the veranda. In days gone by, Mr. Potter had rather enjoyed a rainy Sunday. It released him from churchly duties and gave him a chance to take a good long nap. But this Sunday he glared at the downpour malevolently and said things to himself. After dinner he went up to his room and took his forty winks, Bob doing the same, curled up close to him.

At tea-time the rain was still coming down. Mr. Potter had been hoping against hope that it would stop so he and Bob could take a turn round the town before dark. He was almost tempted to go out anyhow. His legs fairly ached from inaction.

Half-way through the evening meal the telephone-bell rang. Mr. Potter, glad of the interruption, rose with alacrity. He hadn't had a bit of appetite for his tea.

"Hello!" he shouted, ear-piece in one hand, napkin crumpled in the other. . . . "Yes; this is Mr. Potter. . . . Who? . . . Why, how do you do, Mr. Van Ness. When did you get back from Montana? . . . Is that so? . . . What say? . . . Oh, yes; I've still got the dog. . . . Eh? . . . Oh, we're getting along fairly well together. Of course I'm not the dog-fancier you are. How are the other pups doing? . . . You don't mean it! Dead! . . . Well, well! Distemper, eh? Now, that's too bad. I—ah—almost feel as though I ought to give Bob back to you. You— . . . What's that? . . . Oh, I don't say he's a nuisance. Of course he keeps things rather stirred up, but—but— . . . Oh, you misunderstand me, Mr. Van Ness. I didn't say I was sick of him. No, no! On the contrary, I find him quite interesting—quite. . . . No—really; I'm not asking you to take him off my hands. . . . You don't believe it? Honestly, I'm not joking. . . . What say? . . . Oh, well, if you put it that way—if you really want the dog back, why, of course, I'll send him to you. . . . Yes, yes; I'll send him by express next

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week. . . . Oh, not at all! Not at all! Good-by!" He hung up.

Mrs. Potter, alarmed by the trend of the conversation, had left her place at the table and was standing at Mr. Potter's elbow.

"Do you mean to say—" she began.

"Yes, I do!" snapped Mr. Potter. "He wants him back. The other pups are dead. Indian giver—that's what he is! Darned if it doesn't make me furious when I think of all I've been through to train that dog. I wouldn't care otherwise."

"I don't believe it!" burst out Mrs. Potter. "I believe you care just as much as I do. Why couldn't you think of some way to wriggle out of it?"

"Huh!" retorted Mr. Potter. "A fine chance I had to wriggle out of it! How did I know what he was leading up to when he began to talk about Bob? If I had known, I might have invented something, but as it is—well, I can't afford to antagonize Van. And, after all, a dog is only a dog. We'll get another if you wish, or a cat or a parrot."

Mr. Potter's tone was light, but his manner belied it. Indeed, all during the week that followed he was even more depressed than Mrs. Potter. Bob, puzzled by his master's spineless attitude, did everything he could to provoke an outburst, but his wildest antics fell flat. With his feet straddled, head on one side, ears perked inquiringly, he eyed Mr. Potter disgustedly.

"Don't know what to make of me, do you, kid?" said Mr. Potter, scratching gloomily at the ruff back of the dog's ears. "Well, you'll find out soon enough."

A MOTOR-EXPRESS ran between Valley Green and Westmont, where Mr. Van Ness's farm was located, and the next day being Saturday, when Mr. Potter did not go to the office, he had arranged to crate Bob and have the expressman call for him.

Of course the day was fine. "Such days always are," Mr. Potter told himself morosely. Somehow, it was going to be harder to let the pup go than he had imagined. The expressman had been notified to come at eleven, but right after breakfast Mr. Potter 'phoned him to make it three o'clock instead. Then he snatched up his cap and stick, whistled for Bob and set off along the river—their usual Saturday hike.

Bob was delighted. He darted about Mr. Potter as though beside himself. And Mr. Potter, casting aside his depression, responded valiantly. But on the way home his spirits sank again. Bob, too, seemed quite subdued, and walked at Mr. Potter's side as sedately as a four-year-old. It was as though he suspected what was coming.

The original crate in which Bob had arrived—a fairly large one—was stored in the garage. About an hour before the expressman was due, Mr. Potter hauled it out, knocked off the slats viciously, thrust Bob inside and, while Mrs. Potter held him there, replaced the bars.

Mrs. Potter was in tears.

"Why, the poor thing can hardly turn round," she wailed, "he's grown so! You should have got a larger box, Emory."

"He doesn't need to turn round," responded Mr. Potter gruffly. "He can lie down and take a nap. It's only a four-hour trip to Westmont."

"Well," said Mrs. Potter, "I'm going indoors. It breaks my heart to see him this way." Reaching through the bars, she pulled the dog's ears affectionately. "Good-by, Bob! If *I* had *my* way, you'd never go to Westmont. Good-by!"

Left alone, Bob and Mr. Potter gazed at each other. Every moment Mr. Potter expected to see Bob elevate his nose and give forth sounds of lamentation. But it seemed as though the dog realized the hopelessness of his predicament. All he did was to crouch in a corner and lift his eyes beseechingly. Suddenly Mr. Potter blew his nose violently.

"Good Lord, pup!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "Why don't you howl? Go on—howl! If you don't, I'll do it for you."

After which, he fled to the front veranda, where he walked up and down, smoking pipe after pipe, until the expressman arrived.

That night Mr. and Mrs. Potter retired early. Somehow, they had nothing to talk about, and half an hour after they got out the card-table they put it away again. By nine o'clock the house was in darkness.

Mr. Potter decided to go to sleep at once. Flat on his back in the middle of his mattress, he shut his eyes resolutely. Getting no results that way, he turned over on his stomach, then to his left side and his right, after which he sat up and said, "Phew!" Stretched out again, he tried to keep tabs on a flock of sheep jumping a fence, only to

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have them turn into Airedale terriers. Finally he gave up in despair and let his thoughts center on Bob, as they seemed determined to do.

Whatever had possessed him to give the dog back? There had been no strings to the gift. And suppose Van did get peeved? All right. It wouldn't ruin the firm, would it? Heavens, what an ass he had been—making himself and Sally miserable for nothing!

He stretched his toes toward the footboard. My—my! Didn't he remember how Bob used to worry them through the covers sometimes? Really, he couldn't feel worse if he had had a death in the family.

Erect once more, he clasped his hands about his knees and stared into the darkness.

"Two months from now," he muttered, dejectedly, "if I went out to Van's place, I don't s'pose the pup would remember me. Oh, well; it can't be helped. It's done now."

All at once he stiffened. Through the window came an eery sound. Swinging his legs over the side of the bed, he remained there, listening intently. He could have sworn he had heard a dog howling. Presently it came again—from the back of the house, where the garage was.

Mr. Potter's scalp began to prickle. This would never do. If the thing was going to prey on his mind in this fashion, he'd soon be in a sanatorium. There it was again! Blood-curdling! Downright haunting! He'd read of such happenings—Poe or one of those chaps—but, good heavens——

"Emory!" Mrs. Potter came hurrying through the doorway that led from his room to hers. Mr. Potter rose to meet her. "Emory, I hear something howling!"

Mr. Potter swallowed convulsively. Worse and worse! It looked as though both of them were going to have a nervous breakdown.

"There! Don't you hear it, Emory?"

Mr. Potter did, all too plainly.

Suddenly Mrs. Potter clutched at him.

"Emory Potter, I do believe it's Bob!"

"What!" bawled Mr. Potter. "Bob? My soul! I never thought of that! I wonder if anything could have happened."

Frantically he rushed to the window and leaned out. Clear and distinct from round the corner of the house came the sound of canine wailing.

With a whoop Mr. Potter went bounding down the stairs. Like a tornado he passed through the dining-room, took the kitchen in two jumps and ripped open the door. There on the steps, weary and mud-bespattered, was Bob. His yelp of joy and Mr. Potter's blended together as Mr. Potter grabbed him to his bosom and galloped back to Mrs. Potter.

THE sun had been up almost three hours the next morning when Mr. Potter, still under the covers and with one eye partly open, heard the door-bell ring. Bob, curled up in his usual place, lifted his head and growled.

"Wow!" yawned Mr. Potter, stepping to the floor and reaching for his trousers as the bell rang again. "Must be in a hurry."

Bob was now at the head of the stairs. Mr. Potter, as he adjusted his suspenders, eyed him thoughtfully.

"Safety first!" he muttered. Whereupon he locked the dumfounded Airedale in the clothes-closet and hurried to the door.

On the veranda stood the expressman. When he saw Mr. Potter, he shuffled his feet uneasily.

"Say—you know that there dog I took for you to Westmont? Well, I gotta tell you he's lost."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Potter, permitting a look of consternation to creep over his features.

"Yep! Going up that hill by the cemetery at Birdhaven the crate fell off the end of the truck, and when I went back for it, there it was busted open and the dog legging it for Valley Green as hard as he could go."

"You don't mean it?" gasped Mr. Potter. "Running away, eh?"

"That's what. Them pups are terrible for running away. But o'course 'twasn't my fault. Accidents will happen."

"I 'spose so," said Mr. Potter. "But it's most unfortunate. However, it can't be helped. But you'd better write the consignee at Westmont the facts in the case. And let me know what he says, will you?"

"Sure, I will! Gee! I thought you'd bawl me out something fierce about this, and here you are pleasant as pie. Well, so long!"

"So long!" responded Mr. Potter.

Then he shut the door and went up-stairs whistling like a mocking-bird.

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Adventures A-plenty in a Search for Treasure

The Bucoleon Treasure

The Prior's Vent Yields Its Secret. The Treasure-Hunters Start for the Orient, and on the Way Discover That Safety Demands That They Split the Scent

By Arthur D. Howden Smith

Illustrations by Ralph Pallen Coleman

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

IT WAS through Nikka Zaranko, Hugh Chesby's Gipsy violinist friend, who came from Paris to England to help us in our strange adventure, that we learned we were not the only ones to whom the tradition of the Treasure of the Bucoleon had come down through the ages. From his father, who had been king of the Balkan Gipsies, he had heard the story that a certain Gipsy tribe in Constantinople guarded the supposed site of the treasure, and he also vouched for the fact that an organized international band of criminals with many Gipsy members would go to any length to wrest from us the secret of the exact location of this treasure if ever we succeeded in getting hold of it.

The story of how this secret came into the possession of the baronial family of the Chesbys—and how for over three hundred years it had been lost—is indeed a remarkable one. Toward the end of the twelfth century, Lord James, on a Crusading expedition to Palestine, tarried a while in Constantinople, where he won the favor and friendship of the Emperor Andronicus Comnenus. To him Andronicus confided the location of the vast wealth he had amassed through rapine and extortion, and there was little doubt that it was hidden somewhere in the great group of buildings known as the Bucoleon Palace, now almost razed and overbuilt. The assassination of the emperor left Lord James the sole possessor of the knowledge as to where the treasure was. James' idea was to use it for the rehabilitation of Christendom, if any opportunity arose that would justify such a gift. Failing that, the money was to go to his own descendants.

But for many generations the lords of Chesby were too busy to hunt treasure so far from home. The family had a document known as the "instructions," locating the hiding-place, and which was carefully preserved until the days of Lady Jane Chesby, widow of the Elizabethan lord. She was a strong-minded woman and had charge of the estate during the minority of her son. She took little stock in the whole treasure business, and fearing that her son would waste his substance and his life, as her husband had done, in attempts to recover it, what did she do but hide that portion of the instructions that told where the money was, and left a few lines of verse

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which, it was supposed, contained a cipher-clue to what she had done with the document.

Lady Jane was a rabid Protestant, and another of her eccentric performances was to seal up and destroy all trace of the old family crypt, so that none of future generations could be buried with the Catholic lords.

Lady Jane's drastic action seemed to have put the treasure forever beyond the reach of the lords of Chesby, and they appeared to have quite forgotten about it until the present day, when the twenty-ninth baron became interested in the matter, and that is how I, John Nash, a plain American, got mixed up in the fascinating business.

Hugh Chesby, the baron's nephew and heir—now a bond salesman in New York—and I were living together when one day he got a cablegram from his uncle announcing his immediate arrival, and saying that he had made an important discovery and needed Hugh's help. The latter guessed rightly that this had to do with the Bucoleon treasure. But Lord Chesby's arrival was quickly followed by tragedy. Under the very eyes of his faithful valet, Watkins —"Watty"—he was kidnaped and assaulted. We found him dying in a hospital, and with his last breath he mentioned one Toutou as his assailant, and the deed as having been committed after he had refused to give up a secret.

As soon as possible, Hugh, with Watkins and myself, started for England with the baron's body, and there we were joined by Zaranko, whom Hugh had summoned from Paris. We were to bury the poor man with his ancestors and then tackle the problem of finding the missing part of the instructions, which, no doubt, had to do with Lord James' assassination. When we returned from the funeral we found that a part of the castle had been thoroughly ransacked in our absence. That next day we had a call from Mr. and Mrs. Montague Hilyer, living in the neighborhood, but not hitherto on visiting-terms with the castle. They brought a party of friends, who were presented as Signor Teodoreschi, an Italian chemist, Countess Sandra Vassilievna and Count Serge Vassilivich, brother and sister, and Helmi Bey, a Levantine. They all displayed considerable interest in the room in which they were received, and especially in a verse over the fireplace, also by Lady Jane, that referred to the "prior's vent." After they had gone, Nikka expressed the opinion that they were a party of polite thieves.

But we were too anxious to get at the work before us to bother much about them. First we took up the rimes left by Lady Jane with her memorandum about hiding part of the instructions. I studied it carefully and finally discovered that the first letters of the first and last word of every line spelled "prior's vent." Here, then, was something to connect it with the rime over the fireplace. We felt that at last we had made a start. But we debated the matter until bedtime, without making anything more of it.

IT WAS a long time before I got to sleep. Lady Jane's cipher and its inconclusive information kept buzzing through my head. But at last I dozed off and dreamed of fat monks who popped out of a round hole in a courtyard in endless succession until one of their number, stouter than the rest, became wedged in the opening. He babbled profanely in Latin, and I started to go to his aid—and woke up.

The night was very dark, and there was not even a hint of starshine to light the room. A dog was barking on the home farm just outside the park enclosure, but not another sound broke the silence. I rolled over and shut my eyes—and promptly sat up in bed. I thought I had heard another sound. What it was, I could not say. It was very faint—a gentle, burring rip.

I swung out of bed, reached for a candle, thought better of it, and crossed to the door communicating with Hugh's room. It was ajar, and as I poked my head in I could hear his gentle breathing. Nikka's room, beyond his, was quiet. Exc pt for us three, only Watkins slept in that part of the house.

My first instinct was to laugh at myself, but I opened the door from my room into the hall and listened there. At first I heard nothing. Then it seemed to me that I detected a creaking, as of subdued footfalls. I strained my faculties in tense concentration, but the creaking was not repeated, and I began to believe that my imagination was playing tricks on me.

To make sure, I crossed the hall in my bare feet and listened at Watkins' door.

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Watkins, I regret to say, snored quite audibly, and I was inclined to suspect that he had been responsible for rousing me. But I could not quell the uneasiness which possessed me. I started to call Hugh and Nikka, and stopped with my hand raised to knock on Nikka's door. It would be a fool stunt to wake them for nothing but my own fancies.

AFTER a moment's further hesitation I crept down-stairs into the entrance-hall, groping my way in the pitch-darkness. Feeling more than ever like a fool, I looked into dining-room and music-room. I had just stepped back into the hall when a chink of light shone out of the short passage that led from the hall into the gun-room. It flickered away—and returned.

Wishing now that I had taken the automatic that lay on the table beside my bed, I stole into the gun-room passage. I still thought I might have to deal with one of the servants. In fact, I didn't think very much of anything but the necessity of discovering the identity of the intruder.

The door to the gun-room opened into the passage. It was ajar, but not sufficiently to permit me to see inside. I drew it cautiously toward me. The chink of light was more pronounced. A brief mutter of voices, hoarse and restrained, reached my ears. As the crack widened, I put my eye to the opening and peered in.

The gun-room was a pool of shadows, save only in front of the fireplace, where a single ray of light played upon a preposterous figure crouched on the mantel-shelf. The light came from an electric torch in the hand of a second figure outlined against the dying coals of the wood fire on the hearth. They mumbled back and forth to each other, and now I caught once more the faint noise like the prolonged ripping of tough cloth which had attracted my attention up-stairs.

The light flashed on steel, and I realized that the figure on the mantel-shelf was working with a small saw on the panel of the overmantel containing Lady Jane's verse. As I watched, he suspended his efforts and barked impatiently at his assistant. The ray of light quivered and shifted upward. For a fleeting section of a second it traversed the figure on the mantel-shelf.

I gasped. The figure was that of Professor Teodoreschi, the Italian chemist who had accompanied the Hilyer party. There was no mistaking the tremendous shoulders, the long ape-arms, the pallid face, with its high forehead and heavy jaw. He wore the same costume of shooting-coat and knickerbockers that he had on in the afternoon.

In my amazement my hand tightened involuntarily its grip on the door, which swung out past me with a loud groan. Another beam of light flashed from the shadows close by, focused on me and snapped off.

"*Amerikansky!*" cried a man's voice.

I heard him leap through the litter of furniture, and dimly saw him fling his torch at me. It crashed against the door, and I snatched up a chair, stooped low and lashed at his legs. He tumbled in a heap

"Hugh! Nikka!" I shouted at the top of my lungs. "Attack! Attack!"

I had my hands full on the instant. The man who had flung the torch at me was already scrambling to his feet. The gorilla-like Italian had jumped from the mantel with the alert energy of a big cat. He and the man who had been helping him were now dodging toward me.

"*Ne tirez pas!*" hissed Teodoreschi in throaty accents that were vaguely familiar. "*Percez! Attendez!* Serge! Vlada! *Percez! Poignardez!*"

The Italian's helper reached me first. I saw the knife in his hand, and struck out with my fist. Being a knife-fighter, it was what he least expected, and he went over. I ran behind the large center-table, and, as the Italian and the other man closed in, I reared it on end and toppled it at them. They jumped apart, and I found opportunity to heave another chair at the chap I had just knocked down.

But I was in for a bad time. Teodoreschi and the man who had first rushed me were ugly customers. I evaded them, slipped behind the couch that stood in front of the fireplace and tried to make for a window. They headed me off, and I drove a right hook to the jaw of my first foe that sent him reeling. Then the Italian was on me like a human Juggernaut. He swept aside my blows as though they were harmless, folded me in his great arms and tossed me from him. I spun across the hearth into the fireplace, and brought up on all fours in the ashes.

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Every tooth in my head was jarred by the crash, but I had no time to think of pain. I heard the guttural snarl of the gorilla-man behind me, and looked up to see his knife descending in a stab that was aimed inside my collar-bone. Desperate, I threw myself backward against his legs, and he fell on the couch. Yet he was up again in an instant, and chopping at me, with foam dripping from his lips.

I had to run, and, as I ran, I kicked the fire-irons in his way. They tripped him, and his knife went hurtling across the room into a bookcase. But I could not escape. His companions herded me back toward him, and presently I was battling to avoid his clutch. Once within his reach, I was helpless as a child.

His arms wrapped me like cables; his wicked green eyes blazed at me with insane ferocity; his teeth gnashed at my throat. And his two friends hovered near, watching for an opportunity to finish me with their knives.

THEN I heard feet pattering in the hall, a cry of encouragement. I summoned all my strength for one last struggle.

"Shoot, Hugh! Nikka, shoot!" I yelled.

Teodoreschi lifted me from my feet and turned me face upward in his arms as an automatic cracked in the doorway. He hesitated, glaring down at me. Then there were two more shots, and he slammed me on the floor with a screech of defiance.

The next thing I remembered was Hugh pouring Scotch whisky down my throat—and how good it tasted!

"Did you get him?" I stammered.

"We got one fellow," answered Hugh grimly. "Or, I should say, Nikka did."

I staggered to my feet with Hugh's arm round me. In the doorway I saw Watkins, a night-shirt flapping round his calves, forcing back a motley group of servants. Nikka had picked up the electric torch which had been flung at me, and was examining by its light the body of a man that lay between the couch and the fireplace. As Watkins closed the door, Nikka signaled to him.

"Did they see this?" he asked shortly, pointing to the body.

"No, sir. None of them got inside, and it's quite impossible to see be'ind the couch, sir."

"Good!" Nikka turned to us. "Hello, Jack! Do you feel yourself again?"

"I'm right as can be," I insisted, which was the truth. "Nothing bothered me except having the wind squeezed out of me by that gorilla."

"What gorilla?"

"The Italian—Teodoreschi."

"Oh! Was he in it?"

Hugh and Nikka exchanged glances.

"Well, take a look at this fellow," suggested Nikka.

He switched the torch on the body by the hearth. There was a red splotch over the heart. The right hand still clutched convulsively a long knife with a slight curve near the keen point of the blade. The light settled on the face, dark, hook-nosed, clean-shaven, with crisp black hair.

"Oh, Watty!" called Hugh.

"Yes, your ludship?"

Watkins padded across the room, maintaining all his usual dignity of demeanor, notwithstanding that he was in his night-shirt and bare feet, with a snuffed-out candle in one hand and an automatic in the other.

"Ever seen this man before?"

Watkins stooped, and almost instantly jerked erect.

"It's 'im, your ludship! It's the man that told us 'e came from you. On the *Aquitania*, sir. A just and 'eavenly punishment indeed, your ludship!"

"I'll take a little credit for it, if you don't mind," said Nikka, grinning. "Jack, did you recognize the third man?"

I shook my head.

"The Italian was the only one whose face I saw."

"Well, I had a glimpse of Number Three as he escaladed through the window after Teodoreschi—I'll take your word for the Italian. He—Number Three, I mean—looked very much like the Russian, the brother of that countess you were so smitten with."

"I wasn't smitten with her," I denied indignantly. "Here, Hugh—don't drink all that whisky."

"I like your nerve," he retorted. "Didn't I pour a quarter of the bottle down your throat?"

"Be that as it may," I went on, when he had surrendered it, "I shouldn't be surprised if Number Three was the count.

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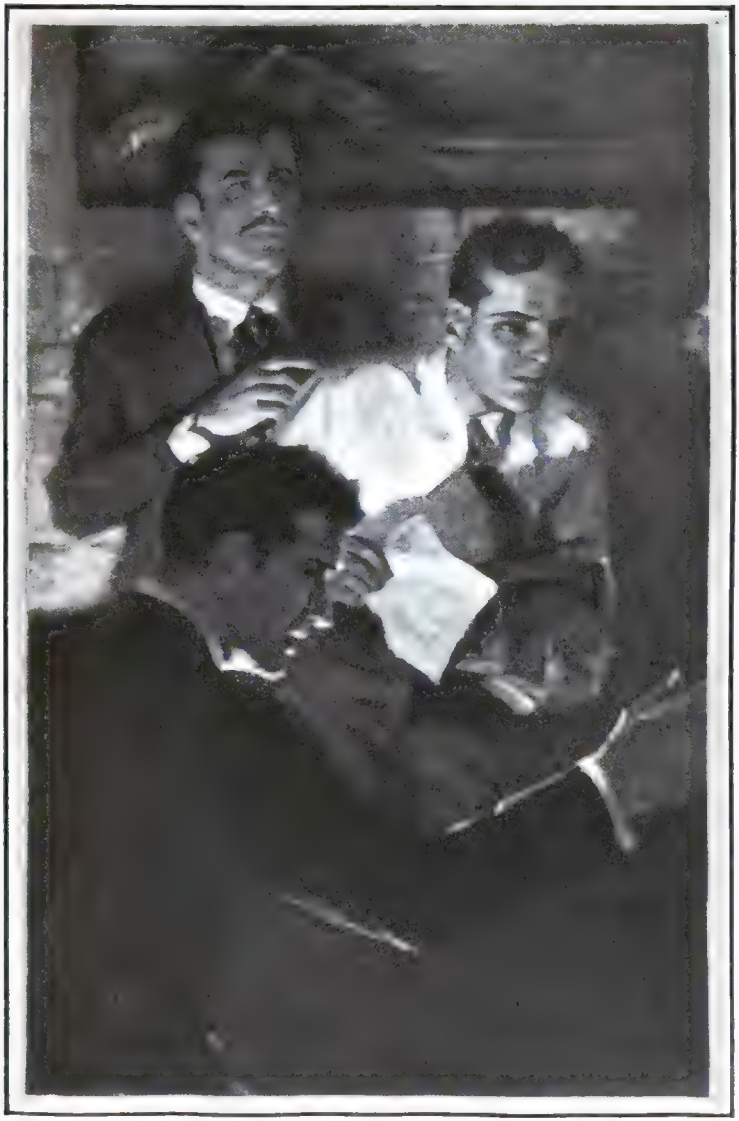

A wild shout bellowed from the mouth of the passage roared and clanged like a trumpet-blast. "That's Watkins," Hugh said. "Something has happened up above. Come on, you chaps!'

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Now I think of it, the Italian called 'Serge!' when they first jumped me."

"That would be right, then," agreed Nikka. "Did he call this carrion anything?" He touched the dead man with his foot.

"He called 'Vlada!' at the same time."

"That sounds reasonable, too."

"Why?"

"The man is a—what you would call a countryman of mine. He is a Gipsy. I tell you, my friends—" He broke off and stared down at the body on the floor.

"What?" asked Hugh.

"Why, this: Our task grows as we draw nearer to it. I have said before that we face a gang of international thieves. But see how their importance swells! Hugh, this man Hilyer, when all is said and done, an English country gentleman living to outward seeming within the law, is one of them. They have a pair of shady Russian nobles, probably with ex-spy records. We have seen a Levantine financier with them. We know they have access to the criminal organization of the Gipsies. We have seen an Italian scientist——"

"He's no more Italian than you are!" I interrupted. "He may be a scientist, but he's French."

"Who is he, then?" asked Nikka.

"He is that same Toutou about whom we heard before."

Hugh leaped up.

"How do you know that, Jack?"

"I just know; that's all. Yesterday I noticed him in church, although I did not recognize him as he normally is. He's fearsome enough in that mood, God knows! Well, a few minutes ago I saw him blood-crazed. And he talked with a kind of rasping snarl. Oh, he's Toutou, all right."

Hugh's face grew bitter-hard.

"In that case," he said, "I am going to drive over to Little Depping and do a bit of killing on my own."

"You can't do that sort of thing, Hugh," I urged.

"Why not? He's a murderer, isn't he? He killed my uncle—butchered the poor old chap. Do you suppose Hilyer would dare complain to the police?"

"WHAT you say is right enough, Hugh," said Nikka quietly, "but you forget that Hilyer's gang are hardly the kind to give up without a fight, especially when the man you want is their leader. Also, I fancy you underrate your enemies' intelligence if you suppose Toutou or Teodoreschi or whatever his name is will return to Little Depping."

"They prepared an alibi for him when they were here!" I cried. "Don't you remember? When they were leaving, Mrs. Hilyer said that they had to put him on the London train before they drove home."

"And you can depend upon it that he took the train," added Nikka. "He probably dropped off at another station, and they met him with a car."

Hugh sat down gloomily.

"I suppose you are right," he admitted. "But I should like to shoot the swine."

"You are very likely to have the opportunity," Nikka comforted him. "That is, supposing you shoot first. Now, see here, you chaps; what are we going to do with this fellow I shot? We can't have any publicity, and while you may persuade servants not to talk about an ordinary burglary, you can't hush them up if it includes a killing."

"What's your suggestion?" asked Hugh.

"Remove him secretly, and tell the servants that nothing is missing and we don't want the affair talked about."

"Suits me," assented Hugh. "I'm not anxious to stir up any more sensational interest. But what can you do with him? The body is in this room. It's got to be taken out. You can't bury a body without digging a grave. That means leaving a trace. Suppose some one should see us, or suppose some one should find the grave and investigate. Mind you, old top, whatever our motives, we are violating the law if we don't report the man's death."

"There may be a way out of your difficulty," I remarked.

"What is it?"

"Use the prior's vent."

They both looked at me as if I had gone mad. Even Watkins regarded me with stern disapproval.

"What are you talking about?" demanded Nikka.

"This is serious," reproved Hugh. "Just because you find a silly cipher——"

"I am serious," I insisted. "This has been an eventful evening. Among other things, I think I have found the prior's vent."

Hugh shook his head sadly.

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"There's been too much talk of secrets," he said. "Watty, go and call up Dr. North. He must have hurt his head in that mix-up."

"Stay where you are, Watkins!" I commanded. "Let me have that torch, Nikka."

I TURNED it on the overmantel. An efficient kit of burglar's tools reposed on the shelf under the carved group of dancing monks, ale-horns and tankards waving aloft. The figure in the middle of the group had a comically protruding belly that seemed to waggle as the light played on it. But what interested me was the small flexible saw that was still fixed in the base of the panel above the dancing monks.

"Do you see what our friends were up to?" I asked. "That fellow Toutou has a keen mind. He is somebody to be reckoned with. He saw what none of us saw, even after we had worked out the cipher."

"What did he see?" asked Nikka.

For answer, I switched the light onto Lady Jane's verse:

Whenne thatte ye Pappist Churchmanne
Woudde seke Hys Soul's contente
Hee tookened up ye Wysshinge Stone
And trodde ye Prior's Vent.

"He saw that," I answered. "And he jumped to conclusions from it. He knew, as we know, that there is something concealed in this house, probably in this room. And he thought that that verse would not have been placed just there unless there was a reason for it."

"By Jove! I believe he was right!" exclaimed Hugh.

Nikka propped a chair against the mantel and climbed onto the shelf. The panel had been sawed through on both sides and part of the bottom.

"Go ahead," said Hugh. "It's ruined, anyway. But I swear I don't see how there can be an opening in back there that wouldn't sound hollow when you rap over it."

While I held the light on the panel, Nikka sawed away, and in fifteen minutes he had it detached from its beveled frame.

"Come up here, Hugh, and help me with it," he said, as he withdrew the saw, and Hugh climbed to his side.

They found a thin chisel in the burglar's kit, and with this Hugh gently pried the panel loose.

"It has a stone backing!" cried Nikka disappointedly, as it came away.

In fact, we all experienced a profound feeling of disillusionment when Watkins received the panel in his arms and the empty area of stonework was revealed, about four feet long and three feet high.

"Too bad!" said Hugh, jumping down. "Especially as we could have gotten a body through an opening that size."

There came a yell of triumph from Nikka, and Watkins, whose eyes had been straining at the opening, shouted,

"There is something there, your ludship!"

Nikka was digging furiously with the chisel at what looked to be a dark stone in the very center of the empty area.

"It's an inner wooden panel," he grunted over his shoulder. "I can feel something behind it."

There was a splintering noise, and the "stone" fell apart. Behind it was a shallow recess, perhaps nine inches square, completely filled by a rusty iron box. Nikka pried the box out and handed it to Hugh.

"Your ancestress was a clever old person," he commented, dropping beside us on the couch. "Fancy her figuring that the inner panel would prevent the recess from sounding hollow when it was rapped!"

The box was about three inches deep. It was unlocked, and Hugh lifted the cover without difficulty. Inside were two papers, very brittle and yellow from the heat of the chimney. The first was a torn fragment from a household account-book:

,Septr. ye 2nde, 1592.

Paid Conrad of Nurmburgge ye Germanne masonne for sealinge ye Olde Cryptte belowe ye Priors House: item, for ye engine for ye Priors Vent: item, for ye pannellinge in ye Gunne-room.	£17 s9 d4
Item, two boxes of Flanders iron	s7
Accompt.	£17 s16 d4

And below this was written,

And I sent Hymme forth of ye Vilage thatte Hee might not have Chaunce to talk howbeeit Hee ys clousemouthed and Hath littel Englysh.

It was impossible not to laugh at the invincible determination of Lady Jane.

"What did she do with the second box?" I suggested.

"Probably used it in another mystery."

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Nikka chuckled. "What's the other paper, Hugh?"

"It's the real thing! Great Jupiter! See what Toutou missed!"

And he spread the second paper on his knee. It was short and to the point:

To Hymme thatte hath Witte to rede Mye riddel: Presse atte ye One time ye Sfinxes headde and ye Monkes bellie. So wil ye Flaggin drop in ye Dexter side of ye Harth. Thatte whych you Seke you shal Discovour in yts proper Place. JANE CHESBY.

I flashed the electric torch on the mantelpiece. "Ye Sfinxes headde" was in the very center of the row of Turks' heads and veiled women that was sculptured along the edge of the stone mantel-shelf. "Ye Monkes bellie" was the bit of carving that protruded from the center of the bibulous group that had upheld the panel bearing Lady Jane's verse.

"I've pressed both of those more than once," I protested.

"But not both at once," answered Nikka.

He bounded up and drove his two hands, palm out, against the projections. There was a muffled thud in the fireplace. I sank on my knees and trained the electric torch inside. On the "dexter," or right-hand side, in the rear, yawned a hole some two feet square.

I crawled through the ashes and thrust the torch over the rim. There was a sharp drop of three or four feet, and then the beginning of a flight of stairs, heavily carpeted with dust. A damp, earthy odor smote my nostrils. The others crawled in beside me. Even Watkins pulled his night-shirt round him and stuck his head in.

"Ever seen that before, Watty?" asked Hugh, backing out.

"Never, your ludship." The valet's face was a study. " 'Is late ludship, Mr. Hugh, was frequently in the 'abit of being alone, as I dare say you know. But 'ow in the world could 'e have found it, your ludship, if he didn't find out first about that?" Watkins nodded toward the gaping hole in the overmantel.

"I'm damned if I know," admitted Hugh. "Maybe we'll discover that later. By the way, how do you suppose you close the vent?"

Nikka fingered the two projections, and the moment he applied pressure the flagstone slapped up into place.

"There's some counterweight arrangement," he said. "The fellow who designed this was a master mechanic."

"Evidently," agreed Hugh. "Well, you chaps, we are another mile-stone farther on the road, but the first thing we have to do is to get this dead Gipsy safely underground."

"Right!" assented Nikka. "But we need clothes and food. You can't tell what we may run into."

For the first time I looked at myself and burst out laughing at the spectacle I presented. My pajamas were torn to shreds, and I was smutted from head to foot with soot and ashes. Hugh and Nikka were little better. Watkins was as immaculate as a man in his night-shirt may be.

"Very well," said Hugh. "Then Jack had best go up-stairs and wash, while Watkins gets dressed and fetches our clothes. In the mean time Nikka and I can be disposing of our friend here."

WE ADOPTED this plan, and Watkins also volunteered to tell cook to start breakfast, for by now the sun was rising.

When I came down-stairs twenty minutes later, Hawkins, the butler, carrying a tray, was knocking on the gun-room door.

"I'll take it," I told him. "You go back to the kitchen like a good fellow and keep the maids quiet."

I knocked for several minutes without result, and finally set the tray down and banged the door with both fists.

"All right! All right!" called a strangely blanketed voice. "Who is it?"

"Jack!"

Feet scuffled inside, and the door was jerked open by Hugh, rather dusty and cobwebby.

"We were out under the park," he explained. "We took that Gipsy down safely, and I came back ahead of the others on the hunch you might be trying to get in. There's a regular passage, Jack. It seems to go on and on. We didn't have time to follow it very far."

He set on its legs the table which I had overturned, and I brought in the tray. Then Nikka and Watkins emerged from the fireplace, blinking owlishly, and we three drew chairs up to the table, and Watkins served breakfast.

"Have you had breakfast yet, Watty?" asked Hugh.

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"No, your ludship."

"Sit down, then, and eat."

Watkins looked like a man instructed to undress in Piccadilly.

"Beg pardon, your ludship——"

"Sit down, man!"

"But, your ludship——"

Hugh pointed to a chair.

"Damn it, Watty!" he said severely. "Bring that chair up, pour yourself some coffee and eat."

Watkins complied with an air of outraged decorum.

There was a knock on the door.

"Who's that?" said Hugh.

"It should be 'Awkins with the quicklime, your ludship," answered Watkins, hastily pushing back his chair. "'E had to 'ave it brought from the stables."

"Take it from him, Watty, and then come back here and finish your breakfast."

"Why quicklime?" I asked, as Watkins received a bulky, whitish-powdered sack through the half-opened door.

"We can't very well dig a grave in stone," was Nikka's grim comment.

Watkins dropped the sack on the hearth and returned to his breakfast. He wanted very much to quit with one cup of coffee, but Hugh ordered him back, and insisted that a man who had work to do required not less than four slices of toast and three eggs.

"Bloated I'll be, your ludship," protested the valet. "Oh, if you will 'ave it!"

"I will," said Hugh. "You are going to be on guard here, Watty, while we are gone. Have you your automatic? Right-o! Don't let anybody in."

He took the electric torch and dropped the sack of lime down the hole in the fireplace. We climbed after it one by one. The first stairs were extremely steep and the roof was so close that we had to stoop, but after we had descended perhaps fifteen feet they turned to the right and the roof lifted to a little more than six feet.

"This is where the passage strikes off from the house," remarked Hugh.

THE stairs continued to descend for another fifteen or twenty feet, and then straightened out. At the foot of the last step lay the body of the Gipsy. Hugh was carrying the lime-sack, so Nikka and I picked up the dead man, following Hugh, who lit the way with the torch.

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The passage was beautifully built, with an even floor, and wide enough for one man to walk comfortably. Despite a damp odor it was not muddy, and there must have been some means of ventilation, for the air was reasonably fresh. According to a compass on Nikka's watch-chain, it trended across the park toward the ruins of the priory.

The Gipsy's body was a clumsy load to manage in so confined a space, and we halted every two or three hundred feet to rest. We estimated that we had walked a kilometer when we noticed a gradual upward slope in the flooring. The passage turned a corner. The light of Hugh's torch was reflected on the rusty ironwork of what once had been a massive door.

Of the wood, only a pile of dust remained, cluttered about the broken lock; but the great hinges still stretched across the path, upholding a ghostly barrier of bolted darkness. We deposited the dead Gipsy on the floor and helped Hugh bend back the creaking iron frame. Beyond loomed a vast emptiness, a spreading, low-roofed chamber, studded with squat Norman pillars that marched in dim columns into unseen depths.

The torch could hardly penetrate the heaped-up shadows, but as our eyes became accustomed to the room's proportions we realized that we stood on the threshold of a mausoleum similar to the one in which we had seen Lord Chesby laid to rest. Hugh stepped across the stone sill of the doorway and swung the light back and forth between the pillars. Suddenly it glinted on metal. We all pressed closer, staring at the picture that took shape under the white glare. On a stone shelf lay a skeleton in armor. The peaked helmet had rolled aside from the naked skull, but the chain mail of the hauberk still shrouded trunk and limbs. Next to it lay a smaller skeleton, clad in threads of rich vestments. There was a twinkle of tarnished gold cloth, a fragment of fur. A bygone Lord of Chesby and his lady!

"We are intruders here!" I exclaimed.

Hugh frowned down upon the two skeletons.

"They wouldn't mind," he said. "We have a reason for coming."

He led us slowly round the circuit of the chamber.

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Niche followed niche. Off shelf after shelf lay the bones of men and women whose bodies had rotted ages ago. On one moldered the skeleton of a man in clerical raiment, with what had been a miter on his skull—some cadet of the house who had entered the Church.

HALF-WAY round we came to another shelf that held two skeletons. The inner, obviously a woman's, thrust its poor bones through the tattered fabric that robed it. The man wore an immense pot-helmet of the early type, with eyeholes and nasals drilled in the fashion of a cross. His chain mail was very finely woven, and included mail shoes that had collapsed pathetically on crumbled bones. His gauntleted hands were clasped on the hilt of a long two-edged sword which lay upon his chest with the point between his feet. His left arm supported a kite-shaped shield that revealed traces of color beneath the overlying dust.

On his chest, just above the clasped hands, was an iron box identical with the one which we had found behind the panel of the overmantel, the second of the "two boxes of Flanders iron" which Conrad had furnished to Lady Jane.

Hugh switched his torch on the base of the shelf. In rough, angular Gothic characters we spelled the inscription:

HIC JACET
HUGH DOMINUS CHESBIENSIS
ET
EDITH DOMINA CHESBIENSIS

"The first Hugh!" exclaimed Hugh, with a note of awe in his voice.

And indeed it must have been a moving experience to view the flimsy relics of those two from whose loins he himself had sprung through the resistless life-impulse prevailing over time and death down the procession of the centuries.

He hesitated a moment, and then reached out reverently and removed the iron box from the mailed breast. Handing the torch to me, he raised the dingy cover. Inside was a chest of ebony, bound with silver, sound and whole. It was unlocked. As Hugh lifted the lid, a sheet of paper fluttered out, and Nikka caught it. Across the top was engraved "Castle Chesby," and it was covered with fine, cramped writing.

"It's Uncle James' record," said Hugh. "After the exultation of plumbing the mystery to be murdered like a dog! Poor old chap!"

The note, or record, was whimsically brief and undated.

Last Thursday evening, in studying Lady Jane's doggerel on the back of the instructions, I suddenly perceived the cipher. It occurred to me that the verse on the overmantel in the gun-room must have some connection with this, and after several days' examination I fell upon the secret. I say "fell" advisedly. In my interest in the task I had shut myself up and refused luncheon, tea and dinner, and finally, late in the evening, I sank against the mantel-shelf, weak and half fainting. My hands, groping for support, struck the sphinx's head and the monk's stomach. I felt them give, heard the flagstone fall. After that, hunger was forgotten. I descended the chimney-stairs and found my way here, the first Chesby to traverse the prior's vent since that singular old ancestress of mine so effectually concealed it, and with it the clue to the treasure. I do not see now how I can fail to find the treasure, but I shall leave the missing half of the instructions, together with this note, in Lady Jane's chest, so that, if I should fail, the information may be available for Hugh. JAMES CHESBY.

"This was what he tried to tell at the last," said Hugh. His voice choked. "Poor old chap!"

"There is something peculiar about his finding the secret in one way and our finding it in another so shortly afterward," I said.

"The soothsayers of my people would call it a sign, a premonition," replied Nikka, with a melancholy smile.

"Of what?"

"Of the removal of whatever curse or inhibition has prevented the discovery of the treasure up to this time."

"Well, two men have died already since this last search was begun," answered Hugh, fumbling in the chest. "And who knows how many others have been killed on its account?"

He drew out a bundle wrapped in decaying velvet cloth. Within was a wrapping of silk, and under all a folded sheet of blank parchment, enveloping two documents. One was a parchment, tattered and worn, which had evidently been much handled. It was jaggedly cut at the top, as though by a dull knife or some other instrument. Its surface was crowded with the same intricate black-letter script in medieval Latin as the instructions in the charter-chest. The writing was badly

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faded, and a number of words in the lower right-hand corner had been smudged by dampness.

The second document was a penciled translation of the first in James Chesby's handwriting:

The Great Palace—or, as some call it, the Palace of the Bucoleon—is over against the Hippodrome and the Church of St. Sophia. In the inner court, which fronts upon the Bosporus, there is a door under the sign of the Bull. Beyond the door is a hall. At the end of the hall there is a stair. At the foot of the stair there is a gate. Pass through the gate into the atrium which is off the Garden of the Cedars. In the garden is the Fountain of the Lion. From the center of the fountain take four paces west toward the wall of the atrium. Then walk three paces north. Underfoot is a red stone an ell square. Raise the . . . . . .

. . . . . farewell, my son, and forget not the monks of Crowden Priory and the plight of Jerusalem.

Thine in the love of Christ and the Sainted Cuthbert, HUGH.

Beneath this, Lord Chesby had scrawled:

The missing portion is not essential. Below the stone is the treasure. That seems certain.

We looked at one another, hardly able to believe our senses. The thing had appeared so difficult, so unattainable. And now it was almost within our grasp—or so we reasoned in the first flush of confident anticipation.

"It's a question, of course, whether any portion of the Palace of the Bucoleon remains," Nikka pointed out.

"But Uncle James seemed to have no doubt of that," answered Hugh. "Do you remember, Jack?"

A wild shout bellowed from the mouth of the passage roared and clanged like a trumpet-blast and was shattered by the echoes.

"Your lud — Mis' Jack! Mis' Nikka!"

HUGH slipped the penciled translation in his pocket, swiftly rewrapped the black-letter original and stowed it in the ebony chest and refastened the iron box, which he returned to its former place on the mailed breast of his dead ancestor.

"That's Watkins," Hugh said. "Something has happened up above. Come on, you chaps!"

In the doorway he paused by the body of Toutou's gangster.

"What about this carrion?" he demanded. "I won't have him left in there—with those." He gestured toward the silent forms that filled the sepulcher.

"No need to," returned Nikka curtly, emptying the lime-sack as he spoke. "Leave him here."

We trotted on, and when we passed the first turn in the passage, just beyond the wreck of the ancient door, we saw a light that bobbed up and down in the near distance.

"Your ludship!" wailed Watkins's voice.

"Steady on, Watty!" Hugh called back. "I'm here!"

"Thank God! Oh, your ludship, I'm that——"

Watkins panted up to us, quite out of breath. He carried a dwindling candle in one hand, and his usually tidy garments were coated with dust.

"Must — apologize — ludship — appearance—fell—stairs—" he began.

"Easy, easy!" said Hugh comfortingly, and fell to brushing him off. "If it's bad news, why, it's bad news, Watty. If it's good news, it can wait."

"It was a lady, your ludship!"

We all laughed.

"A lady!" repeated Hugh. "Bless my soul, Watty, are you getting dissolute in your old age?"

"She 'ad nothing to do with me, your ludship," remonstrated the valet indignantly. "Leastwise, I should say, she 'ad no more to do with me than make a mock of me and the pistol you gave me."

"How's that?"

"Took it away from me, she did, your ludship." Watkins's voice quivered with wrath. "And tripped me on my back. Yes—and laughed at me!"

"A lady, you said?" demanded Hugh.

Watkins nodded his head.

"And hextremely pretty, too, if I may say so, your ludship."

Hugh looked helplessly at Nikka and me.

"I say—this is a yarn!" he exclaimed. "Watty, for God's sake get a grip on yourself! Begin at the beginning and tell everything." He grinned. "Conceal nothing, you old reprobate, especially if there were any amorous episodes with this lady."

"Your ludship! Mr. Hugh, sir"—Watkins's expression was a study in injured innocence—"you will 'ave your bit of fun,

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I suppose. As for me, sir, if I was for making love to some female, I'd take one that was not so free with her strength."

"Are you sure it was a woman?" interrupted Nikka.

"Judge for yourself, sir, Mr. Nikka. After you gentlemen left me, I tidied up the room, and quite a time had passed, I should judge, when I 'eard a click, and one of the windows opened in the south oriel——"

"That's the one Toutou and his man escaped through," I broke in. "They probably fixed the lock."

"Very likely, sir. I turned when I 'eard the click, and the lady stuck 'er leg over the sill. She 'ad on riding-breeches. A very pretty lady she was, your ludship," added Watkins contemplatively.

"So you've said before," commented Hugh. "And what next?"

"I said, 'Who are you, ma'am?' And she laughed and said, 'Oh, it's only me, Watkins.' And I said: 'Well, ma'am, I'm sure I don't know 'ow you come to 'ave my name, but I really can't permit you to come in 'ere. Please get down and go round to the front door.'

"With that she 'opped over the window-sill and stood there, looking about 'er. 'Come on, now, if you please, ma'am,' I said again. And I'm sure, your ludship, I was considerate of 'er all the way through."

"I'll bet a pony you were," said Hugh sympathetically.

"Yes, sir. Thank you, your ludship. She looked round, as I said, and she walked over to the fireplace as cool as a cucumber. 'I see they did find it, after all,' she says, and she stooped and peeked in at the 'ole where the stone 'ad dropped. At that I knew she could be no friend, so I poked the pistol at 'er and said, 'I don't want to 'arm you, ma'am, but you'll 'ave to come outside with me.'

" 'Oh,' she says, 'you wouldn't 'urt me, Watkins. You're a nice, kind old valet, aren't you?" Watkins' voice throbbed with renewed indignation, and we all three, the gravity of the situation forgotten, collapsed on the dusty floor.

"Go on; go on!" gasped Hugh.

" 'Ow can I, your ludship, if you're laughing all the time?" protested Watkins. "Oh, well, you will 'ave your fun."

"So did she," I chuckled.

"She did, sir," agreed Watkins, with feeling. "She came right up against the pistol and put out 'er 'and and patted my cheek, like, and the first thing I knew, gentlemen, she 'ad tripped me and grabbed the pistol from my 'and, and there was I, lying on the floor, and she with 'er legs straddled over me, pointing the pistol at me and laughing like sin.

" 'Get up,' she says. And she went and sat sidewise on the table, with the pistol resting on 'er knee."

"What was she like, Watty?" I asked.

"She 'ad black hair, sir, and was dark. She wasn't big, but she was—well, shapely, you might say. And she 'ad a way of laughing with 'er eyes.

"She asked me where you were and what you had found, and I stood there in front of her and just kept my mouth shut. 'I might shoot you if you won't talk,' she says. 'And if you do there'll be those that will hear it, and you'll be seen before you get away,' I told 'er. 'True,' says she; 'and I couldn't bring myself to do it, anyway. You're too sweet. You can tell your master, though, that we're not sorry 'e's found what 'e was looking for. If we couldn't find it, the next best thing was for 'im to find it. Whatever 'e does,' she says, ' 'e'll play into our 'ands.'

"Then she walked over to the window and dropped the pistol on a chair. ' 'Ere,' she says; 'you might 'ave me taken up for breaking and entering if I went off with this.' And she 'opped over the sill onto the lawn. When I got there she was in 'er saddle and riding away. I tried to telephone to the lodge to 'ave 'er stopped, but the wires were cut. They must 'ave done it in the night, your ludship. 'Awkins was unable to get through to any of the village tradespeople this morning."

"Was that all?" asked Hugh.

"Yes, your ludship. I called 'Awkins and told 'im to stand in the front door and send away anybody who came. Then I climbed down into the 'ole, thinking you would wish to know what 'ad 'appened immediately, your ludship."

"YOU did quite right, Watty. I don't blame you for what happened. The lady must have been a Tatar." Hugh turned to us. "It seems to me the lesson for us in this last experience is that we have got to move rapidly if we are going to shake off Toutou's gang," he said. "They are fully

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as formidable as Nikka warned us they would be. We ought to start for Constantinople this afternoon."

"There's no question of that," assented Nikka. "But what are you going to do with the key to the treasure? You have it in your pocket now, but it is a long journey to Constantinople. Suppose they steal it *en route?* They may have plenty of opportunities, you know. Personally, I am not sanguine of shaking them off. Then, too, you must remember that Constantinople is the human sink of Europe, Asia and Africa. It swarms with adventurers and dangerous characters. The refuse of half a dozen disbanded armies makes its headquarters there. It will be a simple matter for a gang like Toutou's to waylay you or search your baggage."

Hugh flushed.

"I had thought of that," he said. "Er—the fact is, Jack has a cousin—a girl we both know——"

"You mean you do," I interrupted sarcastically. "I'm only her cousin. Have you heard from Betty?"

"Yes—damn you! She and her father are at the Pera Palace—he's an archaeologist-bibliophile johnnie, Nikka, and an awfully good sort."

"And the girl?" inquired Nikka, with his quiet grin.

"Oh, you'll meet her, too. She's very different from what you'd expect in a cousin of Jack's. Anyhow, she knows about this treasure business, and she read of Uncle James' murder, and she's most fearfully keen to be in the game with us. My suggestion is that I post Uncle James' translation of the key to her in Constantinople. Nobody knows that she knows me or has any connection with any of us. She left New York before Uncle James arrived. So it would be perfectly safe in her hands."

"And in the mean time we'd better commit it to memory," I said.

The others agreed to this, and we read over the brief transcript of the missing half of the instructions until we had the salient directions fixed in our minds. Then we retraced our steps through the passage, climbed out of the prior's vent and sealed it again; and while Hugh and Nikka motored down to the village post-office with the letter for Betty, Watkins and I saw to the packing for the journey.

We had bags ready for all four of us by lunch-time, and arranged with Hawkins to send trunks after us to the Pera Palace in bond. When Hugh and Nikka returned from the village, all that was necessary was to eat the meal, issue final directions to the servants for the repairing of the panel of the overmantel—the removal of which we represented to have been the work of the burglars—and fill up the tank of the car.

With an eye to a possible emergency we had arranged in advance for a considerable supply of gold and negotiable travelers' notes, and our passports, thanks to Hugh's influence, had been viséed for all countries in southern and eastern Europe.

THE run to Dover was without incident, but on the Channel boat we had the sensation of being watched, although we could not have pointed to any persons and accused them of spying. Certainly none of the Hilyer party was in evidence.

At Calais we passed the customs and passport officials expeditiously, because both Hugh and Nikka were personages—a doubtful asset, as we were soon to learn. And on the Paris train we actually thought we had eluded surveillance until we rolled into the Gare du Nord and started to disembark. It was Nikka who pointed to the little red chalk mark on the door of our compartment, and Watkins who spotted a furtive individual who slunk down the corridor as we stepped into it, a rat-faced fellow of the *apache* type.

We drove to a little hotel near the Louvre which is noted for its table, its seclusion and its steady patronage. The proprietor welcomed us as old friends, and we were provided with the choicest fare and the most comfortable rooms he had to offer.

The four of us were dog-tired. But before we turned in Nikka telephoned a private number at the Préfecture of Police.

The result of his call was demonstrated when we went down to breakfast the next morning. A jaunty little man in a top-hat and frock coat, with spats and a gold-headed cane, flew up to Nikka and embraced him in the center of the lobby. And Nikka introduced him to us as Monsieur Doumergue, *commissaire* of the *Police de Surêté*, or secret police.

Would he do us the honor of taking breakfast with us? *Mais certainement!* He had

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taken the necessary steps already to dispense with the usual formalities for arriving and departing travelers, and he had also examined the *dossiers* of the individuals Monsieur Zaranko had named.

This last was what especially interested us, and we listened closely to the facts he recited from a note-book.

"Of Toutou Lafitte, *messieurs*, but little can be said. If you have seen him, then you have seen one whom no police official can claim knowingly to have laid eyes on. But we feel him, *messieurs*. We hear of him. We sense his manifold activities. If the stories which others like yourselves tell us are true, he is a genius, a monster. He rules the criminal world. He has the brain of a statesman, the instincts of an animal.

"Hilmi Bey, we know well. During the war he found it convenient to dwell in Switzerland. He has been mixed up in various shady *coups*, both in Egypt and in Turkey. He has sources of income we have never been able to discover. Prior to this, nobody has associated him with Toutou.

"And this Russian pair! Vassilivich and Vassilievna! They are notorious as international spies. Before the war they worked in the German interest. During the war—who can say? Had we caught them they would have been shot out of hand. But the war is over, I regret to say, *messieurs*. They hold their titles of right, and undoubtedly come of an honorable family or families. For as to their being brother and sister—*tiens!* Why worry about the unessential?

"The Hilyers have been watched since before the war on suspicion of being implicated in dishonorable gambling transactions. But in France, *messieurs*, a wide latitude is allowed in these matters, and so far we have not been able to catch them—how is it the excellent Americans say? Ah, yes; 'wiz zee goods.'

"Is this of assistance? I regret deeply I cannot add more. But if I can aid you in any way, if you are annoyed in Paris or subjected to observation, pray call upon me."

He bowed himself out.

"That's all very well," remarked Hugh, as we wandered over to the news-stand in the lobby, "and his information is valuable, but, damn it all, Nikka, we can't call on him officially. If we complain of being shadowed at the Préfecture of Police, they will ask us the object of it, and if we tell them the truth, you can be sure the secret will leak out. No, lads; the only thing for us to do is to dodge our trailers."

I shook the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail* in front of him.

"How the devil can we dodge trailers?" I demanded. "I just picked up this paper, and look at what I see on the front page!"

There under a two-line head was the following announcement:

> Lieut.-Col. Lord Chesby, D. S. O., accompanied by Mr. Nikka Zaranko, the famous violinist, and Mr. John Nash, an American friend, crossed on the Calais boat yesterday and arrived in Paris last night. Lord Chesby recently succeeded to the title under circumstances of very tragic interest.

"There's only one thing to do," said Hugh. "Where's Watkins? We'll collect him and book for the first train to Marseilles. They'll expect us to go direct by the Orient Express."

WE RATHER prided ourselves on our cleverness as we sat back in a reserved compartment of the Lyons-Mediterranean express, and watched the Tour Eiffel fade against the sky. We had moved with considerable celerity. First, we had loaded ourselves and baggage into waiting taxis in front of the hotel. Then we had driven in these to the Gare de l'Est, dodged in and out of that whirlpool of life, and reentered two taxis, which we had directed in a reasonless jaunt through the central district of Paris.

Then Nikka and I had left Hugh and Watkins with the taxis in a side-street near the Madeleine and bought the tickets at Cook's. We had returned to the taxis by a roundabout route, and resumed our crazy progress from one side of the river to the other and back again. We had lunched, and returned to the station just in time to climb aboard the train. And finally, instead of risking the separation entailed by patronage of the *wagons-lit*, we had elected to seclude ourselves in a single compartment.

Hugh voiced the sentiments of three of us when he stretched out his legs and exclaimed:

"What price Toutou's vermin now? I jolly well bet they esteem us artful dodgers."

Nikka smiled.

"Don't be too sure," he cautioned.

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"Rats!" grunted Hugh. "Sherlock Holmes himself couldn't have traced us, eh, Watty?"

"I'm sure I don't see 'ow any one could 'ave followed us, your ludship," replied the valet wearily. "I don't quite know where I am myself, sir."

"I fear you haven't any submerged criminal instincts, Watty," chaffed Hugh. "Now, I find myself getting a bit of a thrill out of this hide-and-seek stuff. By Jove! I almost wish we had the police after us, too. That would be a treat!"

"A fair treat!" groaned Watkins. "I mean no disrespect, your ludship, and it may be there's no call for the remark, but glad I'll be when this treasure is safe in the bank and we can go 'ome to Chesby."

We all laughed.

"How about dinner?" I asked. "Shall we eat by shifts or——"

"What's the use?" returned Hugh. "We haven't anything that will do 'em any good, and, besides, they're peeking into all the compartments of the Orient Express at this moment."

SO WE adjourned together to the restaurant-car, dragging Watkins with us, much against his will, and we ate a jovial meal, all relieved by the relaxation in the strain which had been imposed upon us and enjoying the comic reluctance with which Watkins permitted himself to be forced to sit at the table with Hugh.

"Damn it, Watty!" Hugh finally explained. "You're not a valet on this trip. You're a brother adventurer. I don't want any valeting. I'm taking you along for the benefit of your strong right arm."

"All very well, your ludship," mourned Watkins; "but if the servants' 'all ever 'ears of it, it's disgraced I'll be. I couldn't 'old up my 'ead again."

We loafed through dinner, and complete darkness had shut down when we returned to our compartment.

"I say!" exclaimed Nikka, as he switched on the light. "Was your bag up there when we left, Hugh?"

Hugh studied the arrangement of the luggage on the racks.

"Can't say," he admitted finally. "But it ought to show if it's been pawed over."

He hauled it down and opened it. Every thing apparently was in perfect order.

"Hold on, though!" he cried, pursing his lips in a low whistle. "Watty, you packed this bag. Don't you usually put razors at the bottom?"

"Yes, your ludship."

"They're on top now. So are my brushes. Everything in order, but—what do you say to giving this train a look-over, Jack? If there are any familiar faces aboard, we ought to be able to spot them. Nikka, you and Watty can mount guard here and protect each other until we come back."

Our car was about in the middle of the train, and at my suggestion Hugh went forward while I followed the corridor toward the rear. I examined carefully the few persons standing and talking in the corridors and violated Rule One of European traveling etiquette by poking my head into every compartment door which was open. But I did not see any one who looked at all like any of the members of Toutou's gang whom I knew.

I was returning and had reached the car next to ours when I heard a scream just behind me and a door crashed open. I turned involuntarily. A woman in black, with veil flying round her pale face, ran into the corridor, hesitated and then seized me by the arm.

"Oh, *monsieur!* My husband! He is so ill!" she cried in French. "He dies at this moment. I pray you—have you a flask?"

Her face was convulsed with grief; I reached for my flask.

"Calm yourself, *madame,*" I said. "Do you take this. I will ask the guard to help in finding a physician."

"Oh, no, no!" she protested. "He has fallen. He is so heavy I cannot lift him. And he dies, *monsieur!* Oh, *mon Dieu!*"

I slipped past her into the compartment, flask in hand. One of the electrics was on, and by its light I discerned the body of a man huddled face down on the floor in the midst of a litter of baggage and wraps. I dropped the flask on one of the seats and leaned over to hoist the man up. As I did so, she reentered and closed the door, still babbling brokenly in French.

"If you will help me, please, *madame,*" I suggested. "He is very heavy, as you say."

"But gladly, *monsieur!* If you will turn him over—so that we may see if he breathes."

The man was breathing stertorously—

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long, labored gasps. I could see very little of him, only an unusual breadth of shoulder and a sweeping black beard. But I experienced an odd sensation of distaste as I touched him, and snatched my hands away. The woman began to sob.

"Oh, *monsieur*, he will choke! He will choke!"

I felt like a cur, and promptly braced my hands beneath his chest. I started to lift him—and my wrists were caught in a human vise. So quickly that I could not follow his movements, the inert man on the floor had twisted me down beside him, his knee was on my chest, my wind was cut off, a pair of steel handcuffs fettered me, and as I opened my mouth to scream, a cotton gag was thrust into place by the woman.

"*Voilà!*" she said complacently, knotting the cords of the gag round my. neck. "Or, if you'd rather have it in American, Mr. Nash, you're it. Here, Toutou; get off him. You won't help by crushing his chest in."

She gave my captor a shove, and he rose with a growl and a menacing gesture of clawed hands to take a seat by the door. I could see now that he was Toutou, or Teodoreschi, cleverly disguised. The black beard concealed his intensely pallid face and fell to his waist. A soft cloth hat hid the fine contour of his skull. His immense chest was minimized by loose, ill-fitting clothes. And the evil green eyes were ambushed behind dark spectacles.

"Get up!" said the woman.

She stooped and put her hands under my armpits, exerting a strength amazing for her size. I staggered up and collapsed on the seat opposite Toutou and as far away from him as I could get. I was weak from the vigor of his handling and the nausea his touch had roused. Inwardly, I cursed myself for a fool. I had been neatly trapped at the very moment I was priding myself on being on the alert.

THE woman in black sat down opposite me—we were both by the window at the end farthest from Toutou. She tossed back the veil which had been hanging loosely round her face, picked up a vanity case and began to wipe a generous layer of powder from her cheeks. Presently she glanced at me, smiling.

She was of a Latin brunette type, with masses of wavy black hair, great lustrous brown eyes and a piquant beauty of face. As her profile was exposed to me, my memory was jogged awake. She was Watkins' pretty lady! I recalled the muscle she had exhibited in helping me up. That was reminiscent of the way the valet had been trapped and despoiled of his pistol.

After a muttered interchange of words with Toutou, she fastened her gaze on me once more and burst out laughing.

"You can't make me out!" she jeered in an unmistakable American accent. "You're not the first, Mr. Nash. How is old Watkins? He knows Hélène de Cespedes, and I'll bet he never wants to see her again. I laugh whenever I think of him lying there of the floor, gaping up into his own pistol. And say—you were lucky that day. I came near fetching a bomb with me, and, if I had, I sure would have piled it into that passage. Where would you have been then, eh?"

She chuckled impishly, and Toutou, from the shadows at his end of the compartment, snarled a sentence that was partly French, partly something else.

"Your affectionate friend tells me to quit kidding and get down to business," she interpreted, with a smile. "I'm going to take that gag out, Mr. Nash, and Toutou is going to sit beside you with his hand on the back of your neck, and if you so much as start to yip, he'll break it just as if you were a chicken." Her eyes glinted harshly. "Do you get me? That goes."

I nodded my head. Toutou moved up beside me, and a shiver wrenched my spine as his hand unfastened the gag and enclosed my neck.

"We are perfectly safe," she continued. "You are my insane husband. We are Americans, and I am taking you to relatives in Italy. Toutou is the physician in charge of the case." She reached inside her bodice and produced some papers. "Here are your passport and a medical certificate. Everything is in order. The one question is: Are you going to do business with us willingly or must we make you?"

"I don't know what you mean," I answered, as coolly as I could. "I haven't got anything you might want. Search me."

"I will."

She dug into every pocket. She opened my vest, felt for a money-belt, felt inside my shirt, took my shoes off, examined

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them carefully by flash-light and made sure I had nothing in my socks. She was a methodical person, that lady. Having searched me, she put everything back in its proper place, drew on my shoes and laced them. Then she sat back and stared at me.

"And there was nothing in the baggage," she commented.

I grinned—but quickly subdued my amusement as Toutou snarled beside me and his steel fingers pressed until my neck was numb.

"None of that, Toutou!" she ordered sharply. "What about your friends, Mr. Nash?"

"None of them has anything."

"But you found something. You must have. What was it?"

She leaned forward and her eyes bored into mine. I stared back uncompromisingly.

"I don't want to have to let Toutou hurt you," she warned softly.

At that, something in me burst into flame.

"It doesn't matter what he does!" I spat at her. "He can't make me tell you anything. As a matter of fact, I haven't anything definite; none of us has. But if we had, we wouldn't tell. I'll die before I help your gang."

That sounds like stage heroics, but I was in an exalted mood. I could feel Toutou's grip on my neck, and I imagined I didn't have long to live in any case.

"It's only a question of time," she went on. "You don't realize that you and your friends are not alone in this. You have a great organization against you. You have as much chance as the fly after he touches the fly-paper. All we have to do is to watch you, and at the worst we can take the treasure away from you when you find it."

"Then, why are you so anxious now?" I rasped, with a fair mimicry of Toutou's feline rage.

" 'There's many a slip,' " she quoted. "We don't believe in leaving anything unnecessarily to chance. You are in a hopeless position, my friend. Why not talk sensibly? We can easily get rid of you and your friends if we care to."

"You'll find it harder the longer you delay," I flashed at her. "You are educating us."

She laughed as merrily as a schoolgirl.

"So I see." She leaned closer coaxingly. "Now, just between the two of us—we're Americans, aren't we?—what did you find behind the chimney? After all, it was Toutou who really saw the point first."

"That's true," I agreed; "but we would have seen it."

"Oh, you would! Then, what did you find? Come; let's get this over with! We'll make an accommodation. Think——"

There was a buzz of voices in the corridor. I heard a dry, official monotone, then Hugh's clipped English French and Nikka's smooth accent.

"But he must be on the train, *monsieur*——"

"Ah, but if——"

"There can be no question he is in one of the cars. What objection——"

"There are people who sleep, women who——"

"But surely we can search——"

The woman opposite me hissed one swift sentence to Toutou and rose, crouching toward the door. Hugh's voice, tense and passionate, thundered over the dispute:

"I dont give a damn for your rules! My friend is missing. I'm going to look——"

A HAND rattled the knob of the door. Hélène ripped off her waist, dropped her skirt to the floor and tumbled her hair over her shoulders—all in two consecutive movements. As she unlocked the door she clutched her lingerie about her. Toutou reached up one hand and twitched off the single light; his other hand compressed my neck and throat so that I could hardly breathe. Hélène pushed open the door.

"Why the disturbance, *messieurs?*" she questioned silkily in French with the Parisian tang. "In here we have illness. Is it necessary——"

One look was enough for them, I suppose. It would have fixed me, I know. I heard Hugh's boyish gasp and Nikka's apology.

"It was a mistake, *madame.* A friend is missing. We thought——"

"Here there are only ourselves," she assured them, holding the door wider.

Hugh cursed bluntly in Anglo-Saxon, and the guard joined his voice in hectic phraseology. Hélène slowly reclosed the door.

"The light once more, Toutou," she whispered, and then she sank on the seat and laughed as she had before, like a schoolgirl on a lark.

Toutou's face was demoniac, despite

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beard and glasses. She saw the purple flush on my cheeks, my straining nostrils.

"Beast!" she hissed. And she slapped him with her bare hand. He cowered before her. She snatched the gag from my lap and readjusted it. "Go!" She pointed her finger toward the other end of the compartment, and Toutou shambled away cat-fashion. "He will murder you yet, Mr. Nash," she said cheerfully. "And I don't want you to get it into your head that I am going to keep on saving you indefinitely."

She rearranged her hair, picked up her waist and skirt and put them on as casually as though she were in her boudoir.

"This writing that you found"—she resumed her questioning—"is it definite? You may nod or shake your head." I did neither. "Very well," she answered patiently. "We will try you further."

AND for two hours she shot questions at me, attacking the problem from every conceivable angle, always with her eyes glued on my eyes, always vigilant for any sign of acquiescence or denial. At last Toutou barked an observation at her, and she leaned back a trifle wearily.

"We approach Lyons," she said. "I shall let you go this time, Mr. Nash, principally because if we killed you it might frighten your friends away. Above everything, if we cannot learn the secret first, we must get you to Constantinople."

Toutou took from one of their bags a length of stout rope and tied my legs from ankle to knee. The train was already whistling for the station-yards. Hélène donned hat and furs, and patted my shoulder.

"I wish you were with us, my friend. Ah, well, one wishes for the moon. Be of a stout heart, and remember that Hélène de Cespedes has saved you from the knife. I fancy we shall meet again, and, as I said, I cannot promise always to be so kind-hearted."

She let Toutou collect their two bags, saw him to the door and then switched off the single light. They went out. The door closed and I was in darkness. I strained at my bonds, but without success. Suddenly the door was reopened. The head of Hélène de Cespedes appeared.

"Here is the key to those wristlets," she whispered, sliding it along the seat toward me. "Your friends can unlock them when they find you. I don't believe in being too hard on an enemy—not when you don't have to be. Well, so long, boy!"

I chuckled to myself as the door clicked the second time. She was a character, and no ordinary woman, judging by her prowess in curbing Toutou's savage nature. I was still reflecting on the amazing three hours I had experienced in that railway compartment when the brakes took hold and the train slowed to a stop between the brightly lighted platforms of the Lyons station. There was the customary clatter of arriving and departing passengers. Footsteps sounded in the corridor outside; a hand wrenched at the door, and a guard bundled in with two people behind him. As he turned on the light, his face was a study in consternation. The two people with him bolted pell-mell into the corridor, shrieking in terror. The guard stood fast and stared at me, stroking his chin.

"*Sacré bleu!*" he muttered to himself. "Name of a *boche*, the mad Englishman was right! I believe they have murdered his friend."

But then I wriggled to attract his attention to the fact that I was alive, and the consternation on his face changed to cunning.

"But no," he reflected aloud; "it may be this is a criminal. Are there, perhaps, gendarmes in company with him? It is for the *chef de gare*——"

But at that moment Hugh, attracted by the rumpus the two startled passengers were making in the corridor, forced his way into the compartment, shoved the guard aside and grabbed me by the arm.

"Are you all right, old man?" he cried. "For God's sake, what have they done with you?"

I motioned to the key on the seat, and he fitted it clumsily to the handcuffs. Nikka and Watkins ran in about this time; the guard regained his feet; the two passengers returned; some more people tried to climb on their shoulders to see what was going on, and somebody else fetched the police.

To the latter I told a hasty cock-and-bull story. Bandits had assailed me, searched me for valuables which, luckily, I did not possess, and left me as I was found. I described Toutou and his companion exactly as they had appeared, sardonically convinced that they would be able to take

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care of themselves against any detectives the French provinces could boast; and the police, impressed by Hugh's title and our assertion that we had an important business engagement in Marseilles, placed no obstacles in the way of our departure.

So the express steamed out of Lyons ten minutes late, and Hugh, Nikka and Watkins escorted me back to our own compartment. And when I reached there, and was safe from observation, I jangled the handcuffs before their eyes and lay back and laughed until they thought I was hysterical.

"It may have been funny for you!" snapped Hugh. "It certainly wasn't for us. We were just getting ready to unload at Lyons, convinced that you had been thrown from or had fallen from the train."

"It's funny for all of us," I insisted, wiping the tears from my eyes. "It's a joke—on us. Don't you see it, Hugh? You were claiming that we had shaken them off. And then they ransacked our baggage and kidnaped me on a crowded train. I tell you they are artists. There never was such a gang. And as for Watty's pretty lady, she is the greatest society villainness outside of the movies. Didn't you feel like a cur when she stood there in the door, pulling her poor little undies together, with the hair tumbled in her eyes?"

"I'll say I did," answered Hugh, with feeling. "That's score for them again."

Nikka grinned at both of us.

"Don't be downhearted, you chaps. The law of averages works in these affairs as in everything. And, anyhow, I've got a plan."

NIKKA'S plan was simple enough.

"When I was a boy and traveled with the tribe," he said, "and we wished to cross a frontier without being bothered by the customs officers or the royal foresters, we divided into two parties and struck off for our destination by two different routes."

Hugh nodded.

"I see. You split the scent."

"Exactly! Our trailers are experts, as I told you chaps they would be. If you will take my advice, you will adopt Gipsy tactics against them. Confuse them; string out their pursuit—and then, perhaps, we can baffle them."

"I think you're right," answered Hugh. "What do you say, Jack?"

"Suits me," I agreed. "Nikka obviously knows more about this kind of game than we do."

"I've had experience," replied Nikka simply. "Besides, it's in my blood. Ever since we embarked on this expedition, I have felt the old Gipsy strain in me clamoring for the open road. Toutou's gang are using Gipsies. Very well. Let us use Gipsies."

"But how can we?" interrupted Hugh.

"My name still means something to my people," said Nikka, with that medieval sang-froid which had amazed me once before. "My father's tribe will fight for me. But, in the first place, this is what I suggest: Instead of sailing for Constantinople by the Messageries Maritimes from Marseilles, let us take the train to Brindisi. Our trailers will expect us either to sail on the Messageries packet or else go by rail to Belgrade and connect with the Orient Express for Constantinople.

"By going to Brindisi we shall surprise them and perhaps disarrange their plans. Mind you, I don't expect to throw them off; but they will be uncertain. At Brindisi we can connect with a boat for Piraeus. When we board that boat, they will begin to believe that they understand our plans, because at Piraeus one finds frequent sailings for Constantinople. And we shall book passage from Piraeus for Constantinople, as they expect. But after we have gone aboard with our baggage, Jack and I will leave the boat by stealth."

"How are you going to manage all that?" I asked.

"You can always bribe a steward," returned Nikka.

"But what then?" demanded Hugh. "You divide forces. That makes each party half as strong as we are now."

"There'll be no harm in that," Nikka reassured him. "Our shadows will soon find out that Jack and I are not on the Constantinople boat, and they won't venture to touch you and Watkins until they have located us—which, I assure you, they won't be able to do."

"Why not?"

"Jack and I are going to take another boat for Salonica, and from Salonica we shall go by train to Seres, in the eastern tip of Greek Macedonia. At Seres—and I don't expect them to be able to trail us there—Jack and I will disappear. We shall

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cease to exist. There will be two additional members in the band of Wasso Mikali, my mother's brother, and that band will be traveling to Constantinople with horses from the Dobrudja to trade with officers of the Allied detachments in the city."

"And Watty and I?" questioned Hugh.

"You go to the Pera Palace Hotel. Meet this Miss King and her father, but don't let anybody suspect that you expected to meet them. Remember, you will be watched all the time. Your rooms and your baggage will be searched. I think they will investigate the Kings, too. Yes; that is likely. You must have Miss King hide the copy of the instructions you have sent her. Not in her trunks— Ah, I have it! Let her place it in an envelope addressed to herself, *Poste Restante*. She can go to the post-office and collect it whenever we need it.

"You and Watkins will not be in any danger. Toutou's people will be too busy trying to find Jack and me. They will be suspecting that you are simply bait to distract their attention—which will be quite correct. But you must be careful not to venture round the city without plenty of company. Take an Allied officer with you whenever you can. You might use the daylight hours to find the site of the Bucoleon——"

"Professor King can help them there," I interrupted. "He knows old Constantinople quite well."

"Excellent!" applauded Nikka. "But, remember, Hugh, I said 'daylight hours.' Don't venture around indiscriminately, and don't go anywhere, even in the daylight, without several other people. The larger your party the safer you will be against accidents—and it is an accident, rather than a deliberate attack, you will have to guard against."

"But how are we going to get in touch with you?" asked Hugh.

"Leave that to us," replied Nikka, with his quiet grin. "Make it a custom to lounge in front of the Pera Palace every morning after breakfast for half an hour, and keep a look out for Gipsies. You'll be seeing them all the time, of course, but don't let on that you're interested in them. Some morning two especially disreputable fellows will come by, and one of them will contrive to get a word with you. Follow them."

"That's a corking plan!" Hugh approved warmly. "Well, lads, we'll be in Marseilles early in the morning. Shall we nap a bit?"

IF WE were followed in Marseilles we didn't know it. We left the railway station only to get breakfast and despatch a telegram from Nikka to his uncle—or, rather, to an address in Seres which acted as a clearing-house for the operations of this particular Gipsy band. Then we took the train for Milan, and stopped off overnight to secure some sleep. The Italian railways were never very comfortable, and the war did not improve them.

We figured, too, that by stopping at Milan we might additionally confuse our shadows, as the city was a natural point of departure for Belgrade. But the first person I saw in the Southern Express restaurant-car was Hélène de Cespedes. She had discarded her black dress for a modish costume with furs, and sat by herself in dignified seclusion, looking at once smartly aristocratic and innocently lovely. She greeted me with a smile and crooked her finger.

"Don't you 'ave nothing to do with 'er, Mr. Jack!" breathed Watkins explosively from the rear of our group. "That's *er!*"

"Is that the pretty lady?" whispered Hugh. "My word, Watty; I'll forgive you! Jack, you hound, present us. She looks better than she did the other night."

I looked at Nikka.

"It's a good plan to know your enemies," he said. "They already know us. It can't do any harm for us to know them."

Hélène gave us a charming smile.

"I'm delighted to meet you boys," she said. "And dear old Watkins! We're quite friends, aren't we, Watkins?"

Watkins mumbled something that I fear was hardly courteous.

"You can introduce me as the Countess de Cespedes, if you like, Mr. Nash," she continued. "I wonder if you knew Cespedes, Mr. Zaranko? He was a rotten old duffer, but he took me off the stage."

"I've heard of him," said Nikka. "Didn't he leave you anything to keep you going?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Other girls had the pickings before I met him. There was nothing left for me but the name."

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Toutou reached up one hand and twitched off the single light; his other hand compressed my neck and throat so that I could hardly breathe. Hélène pushed open the door.

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"Is that the only one you use?" asked Hugh.

"Oh, come, now!" she remonstrated. "There's a flag of truce up. Really, though, if you mention our opposition, I ought to compliment you on your work so far. I believe you might elude any mob but ours."

"We'll leave the decision on that point to the future." Nikka smiled. "By the way, how did you come to get into this game?"

She shrugged her shoulders again. She was an odd mixture of Latin grace and American ease.

"It's the sort of thing I do best. My folks were wops of some kind. I was born in New York. I went with crooks after I left school. Then I joined the 'Follies,' and a broker cottoned to me. He educated me—music, languages, all that stuff. I went to Paris with him. When we broke off, I tried the stage there. It was just before the war. I was only a kid still, and Cespedes fell for me. After he croaked, I tried a bit of everything. For a while I worked for the Austrians——"

"Spy?" questioned Nikka.

"Sure! There's no harm in mentioning it now, and, anyway, I was never caught. That was how I happened to meet Serge and Sandra; they were in Toutou's mob. I needed money; he needed brains and a doll-baby face."

"You seem to have a grip on him," I said. "But I don't see how you can stand the beast. He gives me the creeps."

She eyed me curiously.

"I'm not afraid of him," she answered indifferently. "Most women are attracted by him, you know. You haven't seen his other side."

"I don't want to."

"I hope you don't," she agreed. "Say—did you know you made quite a hit with Sandra, Mr. Nash?"

Hugh and Nikka laughed. I flushed.

"Oh, you needn't flare up!" she said. "I can see why she did. You boys are a good bunch of sports. I wish we didn't have to trim you."

"Why do it, then?" asked Hugh.

"I don't sell out," she answered curtly. "Get that straight, Lord Chesby. Since I was a kid I've had to fight my own way. As near as I can make out, the kind of people who are called 'respectable' and 'honest' are only cleverer crooks than the rest of us. I'm out to make all I can in my own way, and I play according to the rules of my mob."

"You called us good sports," Nikka pointed out. It was her turn to flush.

"Call it a woman's soft heart," she returned. "Honestly, I get fed up on this life once in a while. If I could have married a decent wop back in New York and had a few kids and worked my fingers off—well, I wouldn't have been able to get along without corsets and put it over you the way I did on the Marseilles train the other night, Lord Chesby."

"That may be true," Hugh agreed. "You are the first—ah——"

"Crook," she flashed, with a show of white teeth.

"Thanks for the word! You are the first of your species I've had the pleasure of meeting. I don't quite see the attraction of the life for you."

"You wouldn't," she replied. "I'm what you English call a 'wrong 'un.' Maude Hilyer thinks that if she and Monty could cash in, they could chuck this life and go straight. But I know she's dead wrong. If you're once wrong, you're always wrong. The best thing you can do is to play safe and steer clear of the cops. That's me."

"But I say!" Hugh objected. "You say everybody is crooked, and next you say——"

"Never mind what I say," she interrupted. "You aren't going to reform me. And I'm against you. And if I can trim you, I'll do it; and if Toutou wants to knife you and it won't interfere with the game, why, I'll let him go ahead. And with it all I like you. Now do you understand me?"

"Yes," said Hugh, smiling.

"Well, you must be hungry, boys," she continued. "You don't want to save a lot of trouble, and maybe your lives, by giving up that treasure-secret, I suppose?"

"No, thanks, Countess," laughed Hugh. "We'll give you a bit of a run for your money yet."

She laughed back with that pleasant, well-bred trill of a care-free schoolgirl, and we bowed and left her.

THE next time we saw her she was standing by the gangplank of the steamer at Brindisi.

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"Aren't you going on with us?" I hailed her.

"No, Mr. Nash. I'm leaving you in competent hands. Good Lord, boy, you can't dodge us! We've got a system—well, the late well-known czar might have been proud to own it. Be good, and give up before you get hurt."

"That goes for your people, too," I replied a trifle grimly, for I was growing tired of threats.

She waved her hand impatiently, and stepped over to my side. Hugh and the others were passing up the gangplank.

"Say, boy; I don't want you to get hurt. Neither does Sandra. If anything goes wrong, watch your step. We'll do what we can, but——"

She pivoted on her heel and melted into the crowd. I climbed the gangplank with my chin on my shoulder, and was met with a shower of joshes by Hugh and Nikka.

"Doing a little missionary work?" inquired Hugh.

"Do you flatter yourself you've roused the lady's disinterested affections?" asked Nikka.

"No—to both of you," I retorted. "But she—what's the word the novelists use?—oh, yes; she intrigues me."

"She'll intrigue you out of everything you know if you're not careful," Nikka warned me.

Hugh predicted that we would yet meet her on board, but a diligent search of the vessel failed to reveal any one who remotely resembled her, and we took account of several blond peasants in our canvass. Also, whoever she had delegated to watch us kept themselves severely in the background. We were not conscious of any espionage.

AT PIRÆUS we had a choice of several steamers sailing for Constantinople, none of them Greek, however, as Greece was at war with the Kemalist government which had been set up in Anatolia. Nikka pitched upon a French boat that lay across the wharf from a Greek liner plying to Salonica and the Greek islands of the Ægean. The Frenchman was sailing at dawn the next morning; the Salonica boat was due to cast off several hours later.

We booked two cabins on the Frenchman, and hired a clerk at the British consulate to reserve a cabin and passage for two on the Salonica boat. This arrangement made, we mustered our scanty baggage and boarded the Frenchman just before dinner-time. We dined together ostentatiously in the saloon, having publicly concluded a treaty with the purser that we might spend the night on board and so avoid the inconvenience of an early-morning start. And after dinner, with many yawns and protestations of weariness, we betook oursleves to bed.

Our cabins were next to each other, and, as a matter of fact, we played poker until long past midnight. Then Nikka and I said good-by to Hugh and Watty and sneaked out into the companionway. Several sleepy stewards eyed us, but there were no passengers about. To the quartermaster on guard at the gangway we handed a napoleon, telling him we were obliged to land in order to dispose of some forgotten business. The watchman on the pier was conciliated in the same way. And, finally, the deck-guard of the Greek liner, once his fingers were greased and our tickets shown him, offered no objection to escorting us to our cabin.

At dawn we were awakened by the whistling of the Frenchman as he backed out from the pier, and from a port-hole we watched him disappear in the mist of the harbor.

At noon the *Epaminondas* likewise cast off, and Nikka and I thankfully abandoned our battles with the cockroaches for possession of the bunks and ascended to the deck.

Nikka sniffed the air as we stepped from the saloon companionway.

"It's good to be out of that stink below," I remarked, with feeling.

"I am trying to smell an enemy," he answered curtly.

"To smell—" I hastily checked my temptation to ridicule him, remembering that occasionally Nikka was startlingly metamorphosed into a primitive creature of primordial instincts. "Oh!" I said lamely. "And—er—do you?"

"No," he said seriously. "It is as Hugh said. We have split the scent."

Will the treasure-hunters succeed with their ruse? See their further adventures in July EVERYBODY'S—out June 15th.

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Mufti

There Are More Ways Than One of Annexing a New Suit of Clothes

By L. Patrick Greene

IT IS hard to believe that there could be any connection between Sir Lionel Tupper, K. C. B., P. C., etc., etc., and the love-affair of one Trooper Harry Briggs, late of Whitechapel, London.

Yet ——

"Either you get a suit of civilian clothes or Hi don't walk hout wiv yeh no bloomin' longer."

"But listen, Gertie," the young trooper of the Rhodesian Police expostulated; "'ow am Hi goin' to get a suit? You know wot my pay is; besides——"

He stopped short. It wasn't quite the thing to remind a girl that he had mortgaged his pay for months to come in order to pay for the ring which graced her third finger.

"There's no 'besides' to hit, 'Arry Briggs. And, wot's more, it won't do yeh any good to come ter see me in borrowed clothes. Yeh got to 'ave a suit of yer own, hand it's got ter fit.

Harry Briggs squirmed. He had a lively recollection of the time when, in order to make a hit with his "little bit of all right," he had borrowed garments from his comrades.

The trousers had represented Andrew's contribution, and Andrew was tall and skinny. The coat was "Fat" Bussy's; Briggs was short and slim. No one at the camp had a hat which fitted him, and Briggs was obliged to choose between going bareheaded or wearing his police helmet.

He selected the latter as the less of two evils, but on seeing the scorn in Gertie's eyes, he wished that he had risked sunstroke.

"You don't want me to be a laffin'-stock of the dorp, do yeh?" Gertie continued in a remorseless voice. "Mrs. Jennings' nurse-maid syes Hi 'm a fool ter throw myself away on a mere trooper. Her bloke's a sergint; 'e ain't 'arf swell, I can tell yeh!"

"P'raps yeh better get a sergint," said Briggs bitterly. "Hi ain't got no love for 'em meself."

"Well, I never! Hi suppose yeh finks Hi can't. Sergint Blake asked me to go a walkin' wiv 'im next Sunday."

"What did yeh say?"

"Like to know, wouldn't yeh?" Gertie retorted. "Hi told 'im Hi would let 'im know to-night."

"Wot are yeh goin' to tell 'im?"

"That depends. Hi'll go wiv you if you get a suit of civies. If not ——"

"But 'ow can I?"

"Other chaps at the police camp seem ter 'ave plenty of clothes."

Briggs snorted indignantly.

"Why wouldn't they? They're mostly remittance-men. At any rate, they 'aven't——"

Again Briggs stopped short. It was the second time he had been on the brink of mentioning the diamond ring. Though he controlled his tongue, he could not prevent his eyes from casting reflective glances at the ring—it represented the price of several suits—and Gertie, with feminine intuition, read his thoughts.

"Hif it's this, Mr. 'Arry Briggs," she said haughtily, "yeh're grievin' abart, yeh can take hit back. Hit's got a flaw hin hit—same as you."

He waved aside the proffered ring in alarm.

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"No! Let me put it back. There's no call fer yeh to carry hon like that, Gert. Hi know it ain't worthy of you, but hit's the best Hi could do."

Slightly mollified, she allowed him to replace the ring, and giggled as, with a show of gallantry, he clumsily raised her hand and kissed it.

"'Ow yeh do carry hon!" she smirked. "Listen! There's the missus callin'. Hi've got ter go hin. Goo'-by."

He caught her by the hand, pulling her toward him.

"Wait 'arf a mo'! Hare yeh goin' hout walkin' wiv me next Sunday, or the bloomin' sergint?"

"Hi tell yeh wot," she said hurriedly: "Hif yeh call fer me in civies, Hi'll go with yeh. Hif you're in huniform—hit's hall off."

SIR LIONEL TUPPER was an abject outsider. But Sir Lionel was wealthy. Sir Lionel had contributed freely and generously to the party funds, had at all times obeyed the slightest injunctions of the party whips. Sir Lionel had—and this was most important of all—the backing of several widely read, saffron-sheeted journals. They called him the "people's David."

Consequently, when Sir Lionel hinted that he would appreciate a Colonial appointment as a reward for his services, the Big Men who run things in the Tight Little Isle sat up and took notice.

Sir Lionel—he had his eyes on the big things of the world—modestly mentioned the viceroyship of India.

As a compromise—the underclerk who suggested it was given a responsible berth in the diplomatic corps—an office was created for Sir Lionel. He was given the title: "chief agent-general" and sent to South Africa.

"He can't possibly do any harm there," said the Big Men, "and perhaps he'll get malaria and die."

Sir Lionel's powers were very limited; the Big Men had seen to that. But he had unrestricted powers of clemency, and one of his first acts was to pardon a native, convicted of the brutal murder of a white woman, sentenced to death by the chief justice of Rhodesia.

Sir Lionel's explanation was that it would be an inauspicious way to begin a new era of justice in the country—as foreshadowed by his appointment—by signing the death-warrant of a native.

"We must cultivate," he wrote, "a love for our black brothers, not allowing the question of color to stand in the way of justice."

And the Rhodesian judge was the squarest of men!

But, as has already been said, Sir Lionel was an outsider.

He was deluged with letters and telegrams from Rhodesians who, well versed in the psychology of the natives, feared the effects of his ill-advised clemency.

"They don't understand," he complained peevishly to the blandiloquent members of his staff.

His aide-de-camp offered this advice:

"Why don't you go up there, Sir Lionel? You could make them understand. These Colonials have had their own way too long."

So the chief official of Rhodesia received the following telegram:

> Will be with you on the 28th, inst. Desire to explain reason for pardons. Arrange to have group of influential men meet me at luncheon. Suggest a guard of honor composed of the Rhodesian Volunteers.
>
> (Signed) TUPPER,
> Chief Agent-General.

The chief official tore his hair, cursed, and then called in his assistant.

"What do you think of that, Davis?" he said, handing over the telegram with a gesture of disgust.

"He's a stinker, Chief—what? I suppose we've got to play pretty for him—put on our best bib and tucker and all that, you know."

The chief official groaned.

"I suppose so. Get out the luncheon invitations and call up Colonel Baker of the Volunteers and arrange with him for the guard of honor. Better have a mounted escort, too."

"Colonel Baker reports, Chief," said the assistant the following day, "that the volunteers refuse to turn out."

"What?"

"It's true, Chief. Baker added that he'd be able to furnish a firing party if you wanted one."

The chief official groaned.

"The escort'll be up to the police, then.

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Better notify Captain Scudder. Have you sent out the invitations?"

"Yes; I sent out a hundred. That, I think, ought to be sufficient to allow for refusals."

Four days later, and only three days before the coming of Sir Lionel Tupper, the chief official received the last of the replies to the invitations.

That of Dr. Lewis, one of the first settlers in the country, is fairly typical of them all.

"I'll be damned if I'll come," he had written.

The chief official was in a quandary, and he was decidedly annoyed.

"It's no laughing-matter, Davis. Sir Lionel has a strong backing at home, and he can make things warm for us. If we had time, we could explain to these chaps that their refusal to meet Tupper is an insult to the crown. It wouldn't hurt them to meet the blasted fool. There's no harm in an ass's bray."

"What are you going to do, Chief?"

"I wish I knew."

"Why not invite the police to attend the luncheon and pass them off as influential men?"

"You've hit it, Davis! Tupper would never know the difference. All he wants is some one to listen to him blurb. Get Scudder on the 'phone and put it up to him."

"Scudder wants to know, Chief," said Davis later, "if it will be all right for the men to attend in uniform."

"Of course not, you ass! They must be in mufti."

"That's what I said, but Scudder says there's not a trooper at the camp that has a suit of civilians."

"Bosh! I know for a fact that's a lie. Aren't they always sporting round the town looking like Bond Street fashion-plates?"

"I know, Chief. But Scudder says they all swear that they are destitute of clothing save that prescribed by the police regulations. And, of course, Scudder can't force 'em to wear what they swear they haven't got."

Davis smiled sweetly and waited for the explosion.

He was not disappointed.

When the chief official's wrath had subsided somewhat, he spoke curtly and directly to the point.

"Davis," he said, "you will arrange with Hamley and Cox to supply each and every trooper at the camp with a suit of clothes, hat, shirt, collar, tie, boots—a complete outfit, do you understand? You will inform Captain Scudder of this, and tell him that I shall expect all of his men present at the luncheon—and in mufti. Is that perfectly plain?

"He can tell them what he pleases, so long as he leaves no loophole for the blighters to wriggle through. He can appoint them all plain-clothes detectives if he pleases, and order them to be present in order to watch the silver. I don't care what he tells them—but they must be there, and they must be in mufti."

Davis whistled.

"And what's this expenditure to be charged to?"

"Entertainment of chief agent-general, of course. Now, get out of here before I go mad and bite some one."

All of which explains why Sir Lionel Tupper failed to see wherein he had not been a success—he resigned on grounds of ill health shortly afterward—for the true story of the famous Rhodesian banquet was carefully kept from his ears.

"I think they recognized," he would declaim pompously, "that I was a man of my word, and respected my motives. And here's a strange thing—an incredible thing, but true: Every man at the luncheon wore a brand-new suit. Fancy that! Wasn't it a signal mark of honor."

AND Briggs? Why, yes; of course. This is really his story.

The day after the banquet in honor of Sir Lionel being Sunday, he hastened to keep his appointment with Gertie.

In speechless amazement she gazed upon the richly appareled youth.

"Ow!" she exclaimed. "Hi 'ardly knew yeh, 'Arry. So yeh did get 'em after hall. My! But that soot is 'andsome. Hi allus did say that a navy-blue suit and light-brown shoes bespoke the gentleman.

"Yeh know," she confided a moment later, "Hi was honly teasin' yeh about the sergint. Has hif it matters ter me wot yeh wears! As a matter of fac', Hi fink Hi likes yeh in the huniform best."

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The Runaways

A Story That Will Recall the First Time You Ever Got Away from Authority—All on Your Own

By Hugh Walpole

JEREMY, on his return to Thompson's that term, found that he had been changed to what was known in the school as the "baby dorm."

Hitherto he had been in a perfect barrack of a dormitory that contained at least twenty beds; the baby dorm was a little room with three beds, and it was a distinction to be there—a true sign that you were rising in the world. This was fully appreciated by Jeremy, and when he also discovered that his two companions were "Pug" Raikes and Stokesley, maj., the cup of his joy was full. Raikes and Stokesley were just the companions he would have chosen, short, of course, of Riley. But Riley was away in the other wing of the house, protecting, to his infinite boredom, some new kids. There was no hope of *his* company.

Raikes and Stokesley were both older than Jeremy; they had been at Thompson's a year longer than he. Pug Raikes was a fat, round boy, rather like Tommy Winchester at home. It was said that he could eat more at one go than any three boys at Thompson's put together. But, with all his fat, he was no mean sportsman. He was the best fives player in the school and quite a good bat. He had an invaluable character for games. Nothing disturbed him; he was imperturbable through every crisis.

Stokesley was the opposite of Raikes in every way—except that he was a good cricketer; and perhaps it was this very attraction of their opposites that brought them together. They had been quite inseparable ever since their first suffering from tossing in the same blanket on the first night of their arrival at Thompson's, two and a half years before. Stokesley was a very good-looking boy, thin and tall, straight and strong, with black eyes, black hair and thick eyebrows. He was known as "Eyebrows" among his friends. He was as excitable as Raikes was apparently phlegmatic. He was always up to come new "plot" or fantasy, always in hot water, always extricating himself from the same with the airs of a Spanish grandee. It was rumored that Thompson was afraid of his father, who was a baronet. Thirty years ago, baronets counted.

Jeremy would never have been admitted into their friendship had it not been for his football. They considered him "a plucky little devil," and prophesied that he would go far. They were a little condescending, of course, and the first night Stokesley addressed him thus:

"Look here, young Stocky; it's jolly lucky for you being in with us. None of your cheek, and if you snore you'll know what you'll get. You don't walk in your sleep, do you?"

"No, I don't," said Jeremy.

"Well, if you do, you'll have the surprise of your life. Won't he, Pug?"

"Rather!" said Raikes.

"And remember you're playing footer this term for the honor of this dorm. If you play badly, you'll get it like anything in here afterward."

However, in a night or two there was very little to choose between them. Boys are extraordinarily susceptible to atmosphere. During the cricket term, Jeremy had

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been of no account at all—quite a decent kid, but no use at cricket. But before the autumn term was a week old, he was spoken of as the probable scrum half that year, kid though he was. Stokesley was in the first fifteen as a forward, but his place was a little uncertain, and Pug Raikes was nowhere near the first fifteen at all and cared nothing for football.

It happened, therefore, that Jeremy was soon taken into the confidences of the two older boys, and very exciting confidences they were. Stokesley was never happy unless he had some new scheme on foot. Some of them were merely silly and commonplace, like dressing up as ghosts and frightening the boys in the lower dorm, or putting white mice in the French master's desk, but he had, at times, impulses of real genius like the Pirates' Society, of which there is no space here to tell, or the "cribbers' kitchen," a rollicking affair that gave Thompson the fits for a whole week.

Jeremy managed to keep himself out of most of these adventures. He had the gift of concentrating utterly on the matter in hand, and the matter in hand this term was getting into the first fifteen. He went in most conscientiously for training, running round big field before first hour, refusing various foods that he longed to enjoy, and refusing to smoke blotting-paper on Sunday afternoon in Parker's Wood. People jeered at him for all this seriousness and, had he made a public business of his sporting conscience, he might have earned a good deal of unpopularity. But he said very little about it, and behaved in every way like an ordinary mortal.

LUCKILY for him, his school-work that term was easy. He had been for two terms in the lower fourth, and now was near the top of it and, inevitably, at the end of this term would be moved out of it. Malcolm, his form-master, liked him, being himself a footballer of no mean size. It was not therefore until the end of the first fortnight that Jeremy discovered that something very serious was going forward between his two dormitory companions—in which he was not asked to share. They whispered together continually, and the whispering took the form of Stokesley's persuading Pug over and over again:

"Oh, come on, Pug; don't spoil sport. You're afraid—yes, you are! You're a funk. I can't do it without you. Of course I can't! We'll never have a chance again."

At last Jeremy, who had more than his natural share of curiosity, could endure it no longer. He sat on the edge of his bed, kicking his naked toes, and cried:

"I say, you two—what's all this about? You might let me in."

"It's nothing to do with you, Stocky. You go to sleep."

"You'd much better tell me. You know I never sneak."

"This is too important to let a kid like you know about it."

"I'm not such a kid if it comes to that. Perhaps I can help."

"No, you can't! Go to sleep."

Two nights later than this, however, Jeremy was told.

"I'm going to tell Stocky," said Raikes, "and see what he says."

"Oh, all right," said Stokesley, in the sulks. "I don't care what you do."

Jeremy sat up in his bed and listened. The whispering voices stole on and on, one voice supplementing the other. Soon Stokesley overbore the other and was dominant. Jeremy distrusted his ears. Beyond the window the night was lovely, a clean sweep of dark-velvet sky with two tree-tops and a single star, so quiet, not a sound anywhere; and this adventure was the most audacious conceived of by man. Neither more nor less than to run away to sea, to anywhere; but, before finally vanishing, to have a week, a fortnight, a month in London at the very finest hotels, with heaps to eat and drink and theatres every night.

"You see," explained Stokesley eagerly, warmed up now by the narration of his idea, "we're sick of this place. It's so dull. You must feel that yourself, Stocky, even with your beastly football. Nothing ever happens, and it's ages before we go to Rugby. You'd much better come, too. Of course you're a bit young, but they'll probably want a cabin-boy on the ship, and then we'll be in the South Seas where you bathe all the time and can shy at coconuts, and there are heaps and heaps of monkeys, and you shoot tigers and—" He paused for breath.

A cabin-boy! Had it not been one of

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his earliest dreams? Jeremy's mind flew back to that day, now so long ago, when he had begged the sea-captain to take him. The sea-captain! His heart beat thickly. Then came the practical side of him.

"But won't you want an awful lot of money?" he asked.

"Oh, we've thought of that, of course," said Stokesley. "My father gave me five pounds to come back with, and Pug's uncle gave him two and his aunt gave him another and his cousin gave him ten and six, and I've got my gold watch and chain, which will mean a tenner at least, and Pug's got his gold pin that his dead uncle left him. Altogether, it will be about fifteen pounds, anyway, and it'll cost us about a pound a day in London, and then we'll go to Southampton and go to a boat and say we want to work our way, and, of course, they'll let us. Pug and I are awfully strong, and you—you carry the plates and things."

London! It was the first time in all his life that that place had been brought within his reach. Of course he had heard the grown-ups mention it, but always as something mysterious, far-away, magical. London! He had never conceived that he himself would one day set foot in it.

Nevertheless, he was still practical.

"How will you get to the station?" he asked.

"Oh, we've thought all about it. It will be a Sunday—probably next Sunday. We're allowed off all the afternoon, and there's a train at Saroby Junction that goes to London at four o'clock. We'll be in London by seven."

"If they catch you," said Jeremy slowly, "there'll be the most awful row."

"Of course," said Stokesley contemptuously. "But they won't. How can they? We'll be in London by call-over. And we'll move to different hotels, and as soon as we think they're on to us, we'll be off to Southampton. There are boats go every day."

It was plain that Raikes was caught more and more deeply as Stokesley developed the plan. Jeremy himself felt to the full the wonderful adventure of it. The trouble was that now, at once, as soon as you had heard of it, the school looked dull and stupid. It had been all right as he came up to bed. He had been contented and happy, but now a longing for freedom surged through him, and for a moment he would like to climb through that window and run and run and run——

But the football saved him. If he went on this adventure, he would never be half-back for the school, he would never be half-back for any school. He would, in all probability, never play football again. They didn't play football in the South Seas. It was too hot. What was bathing compared to football?

"I don't think I'll come," he said slowly. "I'd only be in your way."

"Of course, if you funk it—" said Stokesley hotly.

"I don't funk it. But——"

There was a knock on the door, and one of the junior masters walked in.

"That's enough talking, you kids," he said. "If there's another word, you'll hear of it."

They lay then like images.

WE ALL know how adventures, aspirations, longings that seem quite reasonable and attainable in the evening light are absurdly impossible in the morning cold. Jeremy, next morning, as he ran round the football ground, felt that he could not have heard Stokesley aright. It was the kind of story that the dormitory tale-teller retailed before people dropped off to sleep. Stokesley was just inventing; he could not have meant a word of it. Nevertheless, later in the day Raikes took him into a corner of the playground and whispered dramatically:

"We're going to do it! It's all settled."

"Oh!" gasped Jeremy.

"It's to be next Sunday. You're right about not coming. You're too young." Raikes sounded very old indeed as he said this. "You swear you won't tell a living soul?"

"Of course I won't!"

"You'll swear by God Almighty?"

"I swear by God Almighty!"

"Never to breathe a word to any boy, master or animal?"

"Never to breathe a word to any boy, master or animal."

"You're a good sort, Stocky. Somehow, one can trust you—and one can't most of them. They'll be on to you after we're gone, you know."

"I don't care."

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"They'll try to get it out of you——"

"I don't care. They sha'n't."

"In any way they can. Perhaps they'll stop your football."

Jeremy drew a deep breath.

"I don't care," he repeated slowly.

"We'll have a great time," Raikes said, as though addressing his reluctant half. "We'll come back ever so rich in a year or two, and then won't you wish you'd come with us?"

What Jeremy did wish was that they had told him nothing about it. Oh, how he wished it! Why had they dragged him in? Suppose they *did* stop his football? Oh, but they couldn't! It wasn't his fault that he'd heard about it.

"Look here, Raikes," he said; "don't you tell me any more. I don't want to know anything about it. Then they can't come on me afterward."

"That's sound," said Raikes. "All right; we won't."

THE days, then, that intervened before Sunday could have only one motive. It seemed incredible to Jeremy that the two conspirators should appear now so ordinary; they should have had in some way a flaring mark, a scarlet letter, to set them aside from the rest of mankind. Not at all. They followed their accustomed duties, ate their meals, did their impositions, played their games just as they had always done.

Even at night, when they were left alone in the dormitory, they spoke very little about it. Jeremy was outside it now, and, although they trusted him, "one never knew," and they were not going to give anything away.

The great Sunday came, a day of blazing autumnal gold, enough breeze to stir the leaves and send them, like ragged scraps of brown paper, lazily through the air. The Sunday bells came like challenges to guilty consciences upon the misty sky. Jeremy did not see the two of them after breakfast. Indeed, in the strange way that these terrific events have of suddenly slipping for half an hour from one's consciousness, during morning chapel he forgot about the whole affair and stared, half asleep, through the long chapel window out into the purple field, wondering about a thousand little things—some lines he had to write, a pot of jam that he was going to open that night at tea for the first time, and how Hamlet was in Polchester and what, just then, he would be doing.

He went his accustomed Sunday walk with Riley, and it was only when they were hurrying back over the leaf-thickened paths toward a sun like a red orange that he suddenly remembered. Why, at this very moment they would be making for the station! He stopped in the path.

"By gum!" he said.

"What is it?" asked Riley. "Been stung by a bee?"

"No; just thought of something."

"You *do* look queer!"

"It's nothing."

He moved on. It seemed impossible that the woods should stay just as they were, unmoved by this great event, hanging like old colored tapestry with their thin dead leaves between the black poles of trees. Unmoved! No one knew. No one but himself.

The great moment came. In chapel, looking across to the other side, he saw that their places were empty. Nothing much in that for the ordinary world—fellows were often late for chapel—but for him it meant everything. The deed was positively accomplished. They must be actually at this moment in the train, and he was the only creature in the whole school who knew where they were.

Call-over followed chapel. He heard the names called. "Stokesley," and then, more impatiently, after a little pause, "Stokesley," again. Then "Raikes," and, after a moment, "Raikes" again. Nothing after that happened for an hour. Then call-over once more at supper. Raikes and Stokesley again called and again absent.

Five minutes after supper, the school-sergeant came for him.

"Mr. Thompson to see you in his study at once."

Jeremy went.

Thompson was walking about, and very worried he looked. He had been talking to the matron and wheeled round when Jeremy came in.

"Ah, Cole! Leave us for a moment, matron, please."

They were alone. Jeremy felt terribly small, shriveled to nothing at all. He shuffled his feet and looked anywhere but at Thompson's anxious eyes. He liked

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Thompson, and was aware, with a sudden flash, that this was more than a mere game—that it might be desperately serious for some one.

"Come here, Cole. I want you to keep this to yourself—not to say a word to any one, do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! It seems that Stokesley and Raikes have run away. They were neither at chapel nor at supper. Some of their things are missing. Now, you're the only other boy in their dormitory. Do you know anything at all about this?"

"No, sir."

"Nothing?"

"No, sir."

"They said nothing at all to you about their going?"

"No, sir."

"Gave you no idea that they were thinking of it?"

"No, sir."

Thompson paused, looked out of the window, walked up and down the room a little, then said:

"I make it a rule always to believe what any boy tells me. I've never found you untruthful, Cole. I don't say that you're not telling the truth now, but I know what you boys' code is. You mustn't sneak about another boy whatever happens. That's a code that has something to be said for it. It happens to have nothing to be said for it just now. You're young, and I don't expect you realize what this means. It involves many people besides themselves—their fathers and mothers and every one in this school. You may be doing a very serious thing that will affect many people's lives if you don't tell me what you know. Do you realize that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, did they say nothing at all about going away?"

"No, sir."

"Nothing at all to you?"

"No, sir."

"Very well. You may go."

Jeremy went. Outside, he found the school in a ferment. Every one knew Stokesley and Raikes had run away. He was surrounded by a mob. They pressed in upon him from every side—big boys, little boys, old boys, young boys—every one.

"Stocky, where have they gone to? What did Thompson say to you? Did he whack you? Is he going to? Is it true that they've stolen a lot of the matron's money? What did they tell you? Oh, rot! Of course you know! Where have they gone to, Stocky? We'll give you the most awful hiding if you don't say. Come on, Stocky; out with it! When did they go? Just before chapel? Is Thompson awfully sick?"

But Jeremy stood his ground. He knew nothing at all. Nothing at all.

DURING the four days that followed, the characters, bodies and souls of the fugitives swelled into epic proportions. Four days in such circumstances can, at a small school, resemble centuries of time. No one thought of or discussed anything but this, and there was not a boy in the place, from the eldest to the youngest, but envied those two passionately and would have given a year of holidays to be with them.

On Monday, Mr. Thompson went up to London. The rumors that sprang to life were marvelous. Stokesley had been seen at a theatre in London and had been chased all the way down the Strand by an enormous crowd. Raikes had struck a policeman and been put in a cell. They had been to Buckingham Palace and interviewed her Majesty. They had started on a slaver for the South Seas. They had taken up jobs as waiters in a London restaurant——

To Jeremy, these days were torture. In the first place, he was dazzled by their splendor. Why had he been such a fool as to refuse to go with them? One might die to-morrow. Here was his great adventure offered to him, and he had rejected it.

As the tales circulated round him, the atmosphere became more and more romantic. He forgot the real Stokesley and saw no longer the genuine Raikes. It no longer occurred to him that Stokesley had warts; he refused to see that so familiar picture of Raikes washing himself in the morning, trickling the cold water over his head, his two large ears projecting, crimson. Clothed in gold and silver, they swung, dazzling, through the air, rosy clouds supporting them, to the haven where they would be—the haven of the South Seas, with gleaming, glittering sands, blue waters, monkeys in thousands and pearls and diamonds for the asking——

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Under these alluring visions, even the football faded into gray monotony. In a practise game on Monday he played so badly that he expected to lose all chance of playing in the match at the end of the week, but, fortunately for him, every one else played badly, too. The mind of the school was in London, following the flight, the chase, the final escape—no time now for football or anything else.

The heroes that Stokesley and Raikes now were! Any one who had an anecdote, however trivial, was listened to by admiring crowds. It was recalled how Stokesley, when a new boy, had endured the first tossing in the blanket with marvelous phlegm and indifference; how Raikes, when receiving a hamper from an affectionate aunt, had instantly distributed it round all his table so that, almost at once, there was none of it remaining; how Stokesley had once conducted a money-lending establishment with extraordinary force and daring for more than a fortnight; how Raikes had fought Bates, major, a boy almost twice his size, and had lasted into the sixth round—and so on and so on.

Jeremy, of course, was affected by all this reminiscence, and himself recalled how in the dormitory Stokesley had said this clever thing and Raikes been on that occasion strangely daring—but behind this romance there was something more.

He was strangely and, as the hours advanced, quite desperately bothered by the question of his lie. In the first immediate instance of it he had not been bothered by it at all. When he had stood in Thompson's study it had not seemed to him a lie at all, so thickly clothed was he by his school convention that it had seemed the natural, the absolutely inevitable thing to do. His duty was not to give Stokesley and Raikes away—that was all.

But afterward Thompson's troubled face came back to him, and that serious warning that, perhaps, if he kept his knowledge back, the lives of hundreds of people might be affected. It was true that by the following morning everything that he knew was known by every one else. The station-master from the junction came up after breakfast and gave information about the boys. He had thought it strange that they should be going up to London by themselves, but they had seemed so completely self-possessed that he had not liked simply on his own authority to stop them.

But had Jeremy told all that he knew on that first Sunday evening, many precious hours might have been gained and the fugitives caught at once. Alone in that little dormitory at night, the two empty beds staring at him, he had fallen into dreams—distressing, accusing nightmares. By Tuesday morning he was not at all sure that he was not a desperate criminal, worthy of prison and perhaps, even, of hanging.

He longed—how desperately he longed!—to discuss the matter with Riley. Riley was so full of wisdom and common sense, and knew so much more than did Jeremy about life in general. But, having gone so far, he would not turn back, and he moved about on that Tuesday like Christian with his pack.

THEN, on Tuesday evening, came the great news. They had been caught—they had given themselves up! They had spent all their money. Thompson was bringing them back with him on Wednesday morning.

The school waited breathlessly for the arrival. No one saw anything—only, by midday it was whispered by every one that they were there. By the afternoon it was known that they were shut away in the infirmary—no one was to see them or to speak to them.

During that morning how swiftly the atmosphere had changed! Only yesterday those two had been sailing for the South Seas—now, ostracized, waiting in horrible confinement for some terrible doom, they were only glorious like one of Byron's heroes in their "damned prospects" and "fatal overthrow." All that day Jeremy thought of them, feeling in some unanalyzed way as though he himself were responsible for their failure. Had he not done this, had he thought of that—and what would Thompson do?

At the end of breakfast next morning it was known. He made them a speech, speaking with a new gravity that even the smallest boy in the school could feel. He said that, as was by this time known to all of them, two of their number had run away, had spent several days in London, had been found and brought back to the school. They would all understand how

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serious a crime this was, the unhappiness that it must have brought on the boys' parents, the harm that it might have done to the school itself. The boys were young; they had, apparently, no especial grievance with their school life, and they had done what they had from a silly, false sense of adventure rather than from any impulse of wickedness or desire for evil.

Nevertheless, they had wilfully made many people unhappy and broken laws upon whose preservation the very life of their school, that they all loved, depended. He was not sure that they had not done even more than that. He could not tell, of course, whether there were any boys in that room who had known of this before it occurred—he hoped from the bottom of his heart that no boy had told him an untruth. He knew that they had a code of their own, that whatever happened they were never to "tell" about another boy—that code had its uses, but it could be carried too far. All the misery of these four days might have been spared had some boy given information at once. He would say no more about that. The boys had been given a choice between expulsion and a public flogging. They had both, without hesitation, chosen the flogging. The whole school was to be present that evening in Big Hall before first preparation.

EVERY seat in Big Hall was filled. The boys sat in classes, motionless, silent, not even an occasional whisper. The hissing of a furious gas-jet near the door was the only sound.

Jeremy would never forget that horrible half-hour. *He* was the criminal. He sat there, hardly breathing, his eyes hot and dry, staring—although he did not know that he was staring—at the platform, empty save for a table and a chair, pressing his hands upon his knees, wishing that this awful thing might pass, thinking not especially of Stokesley or of Raikes but of something that was himself and yet not himself—something that was pressed down into a dark hole, and every tick of the school-clock pressed him further. He saw the rows and rows of heads as though they had been the pattern of a carpet. And he was ashamed—desperately ashamed—as though he were standing up in front of them all naked.

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The door behind the platform opened, and Thompson came in. He was white and black and flat, like a drawing upon a sheet of paper. Behind him came Raikes and Stokesley, looking as they had always looked and yet quite different—actors playing a part. Behind him was the school-sergeant, Crockett, a burly ex-sailor-man, a friend of every one when in a good temper. He looked sheepish now, shuffling on his feet. He looked terrible, too, because his coat was off and his sleeves were rolled up, showing the ship-and-anchor tattoo that he showed as a favor to boys who had done their drill well.

Thompson came forward. He said:

"I don't want to prolong this, but you are all here because I wish you to remember this all your lives. I wish you to remember it, not because it is the punishment of two of your friends—indeed, it is my special wish that, as soon as it is over, you shall receive Stokesley and Raikes among you again as though nothing had occurred—but I want you all, from the youngest to the eldest, to remember that there must be government, there must be rules if men are to live in any sort of society together. We owe something to ourselves; we owe something to those who love us; we owe something to our country, and we owe something to our school. We cannot lead completely selfish lives—God does not mean us to do so. Our school is our friend. We belong to it, and we must be proud of it."

He stepped back. The school-sergeant came forward and whispered something to Stokesley. Stokesley himself undid his braces. His trousers fell down over his ankles. He bent forward over the table, hiding his face with his hands. Jeremy could not look. He felt sick; he wanted to cry. He heard the sound of the descending birch. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—would it never end?—eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve.

He heard the whole school draw a breath. Still he did not look. Stokesley had not made a sound.

There was a pause. Still he did not look. Now Raikes was there. The birch again. One, two, three, four— Then, as though some one were tearing the wall in two, a shrill cry: "Oh! Oh!" Horrible! Beastly!" He was trembling from head to foot. He was low down in that hole now, and some

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one was pushing the earth in over his head. And now, with the switch of the birch, there was a low, monotonous sobbing, and then the sharp cry again that, at this second time, seemed to come from within Jeremy himself. Everything was dark. A longer pause and the shuffling of feet. The boys were filing out. Jeremy raised his eyes to a world of crimson and flashing lights.

That night they were restored to their fellow citizens. They were sitting on their beds in the baby dorm, examining their wounds. Raikes could think of nothing but that he had cried. Stokesley consoled him. As a last word, he said to Jeremy:

"Very decent of you, Stocky, not to give us away. We won't forget it; will we, Pug?"

"No, we won't," said Pug, a naked, writhing figure; he was trying to see his stripes.

"All the same," said Stokesley, "it was smart of you not to come. It was rotten, all of it. They were beastly to us at the hotel and just took our money. We went to a rotten theatre, and it rained all the time—didn't it Pug?"

"Beastly," said Raikes.

The room was silent. So that was the end of the adventure. Jeremy, slipping off to sleep, suddenly loved the school, didn't want to leave it—no, never! Saw the rooms one by one—the classroom, the dining-room, Big Hall—all warm and safe and cozy.

And London—swimming in rain, chasing you, hating you, catching you up, at the last, with a birch.

Good old school—the end of *that* adventure!

The next Hugh Walpole story will be published in July EVERYBODY'S— out June 15th.

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Love and Politics in the West

THE LARIAT

Hugh Learns That Happiness and Content Cannot Go Hand in Hand. He Gives a Solemn Promise, but Something Stronger Than Will Makes Him Attempt to Break It

By Honoré Willsie

Author of "Still Jim," "Godless Valley," etc.

Illustrations by Remington Schuyler

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

THE wanton destruction of a magnificent fossil that Hugh Stewart has dug from the Old Sioux Tract was what decided him to yield to the women of Wyoming and run for governor. For he realized that the deed had been committed by his opponents in the fight to keep what he believed to be one of the greatest fossil-fields in the world from being flooded for a huge water-power project which the Eastern Electric Corporation was financing. And, furthermore, he was quite convinced that his father-in-law, Pink Morgan, and Johnny Parnell had had a hand in the outrage.

The tract, which was ten thousand acres in extent and situated near the town of Fort Sioux, Wyoming, had been left to Hugh by his foster-uncle, "Bookie" Smith, on condition that the enthusiastic young paleontologist abandon his work for two years and devote himself to The Lariat book store, which was Bookie's unprofitable hobby.

Hugh was married to Jessie Morgan, whose father, Pink, kept the Indian Massacre Hotel, and whose mother was president of the State Federation of Women's Clubs and one of the most prominent women in Wyoming politics. The young people had drifted completely apart. Hugh considered his wife "lazy-minded," and indeed she did not realize that she had thrown away every chance of happiness until she discovered that mutual love had sprung up between Hugh and Miriam Page, an energetic business woman from Boston, who had come to spend her vacation on a neighboring ranch. Then she determined to regain her husband.

Miriam could not bear the idea of so able a man as Hugh wasting his life in fossil-hunting, and after Pink had outlined the proposed water-power project, she seized upon it as a means of depriving Hugh of his fossil-field and forcing him to turn from paleontology to more practical things. So she returned home with Hugh's heart in her keeping, but resolved to aid Pink with the project, and this led to the interest of the Eastern Electric Corporation in the matter. Of course, Hugh never dreamed that Miriam had done anything like that.

The women of Wyoming were meeting with bitter opposition from the machine politicians in Cheyenne in their efforts to pass the Children's Code Bill, and they saw that hope of success lay only in the election

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of a governor on some other platform but secretly pledged to forcing the bill through the legislature. So Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Ellis, chairman of the Children's Code Committee, came to Hugh and said that they would save the tract for him and for science if, once elected governor, he would fight for their bill.

The incident of the mutilated fossil settled the matter. Hugh was nominated on a Fusion ticket, and an air-plane, christened the *Dinosaur*, purchased from the government for campaign-touring purposes. It was driven by Martin, an ex-ace.

The struggle went on energetically. Hugh received a nickname, the "Gray Stallion," from the fact that he was accused of hiding such an animal, which his father-in-law coveted but which rightly belonged to Red Wolf, a friendly Sioux.

All was going well when Miriam suddenly appeared in Fort Sioux, and this would surely revive the gossip about her and Hugh; no worse thing could happen to a gubernatorial candidate. Hugh's managers were aghast. Miriam was quickly made to realize her terrible *faux pas*. She said she would leave instantly. There was no train out that night, so Hugh started with her for the junction, where she could catch the limited. Jessie went along as chaperon. On the way the plane ran into a fog and struck upon a mountainside. Hugh's right arm was broken, but there were no other mishaps. In the bitter cold and darkness there was nothing to do but wait for dawn, and when it finally broke it was discovered that Jessie had disappeared.

AT THE discovery, Hugh stood in helpless exasperation for a moment. Miriam, very lovely in the growing light, in spite of her obvious weariness, smiled a little.

"You see why she did it, don't you, Hughie?"

"No, I don't. Even with her strength and experience, she's running a horrible risk."

"Of course she knows that. But she preferred the risk to having to stay alone with me. She could go as far as chaperoning us on this trip. She could go no farther. Jessie is a tremendous hater. After all, she has a right to hate me even more than I hate her."

"I don't see why you should hate Jessie," said Hugh, for the first time speaking a little shortly to Miriam.

"I hate her because she's had your youth, because she still has some of your thoughts. I want to blot her out of your very memory."

Hugh, who had been scanning the growing depths of the cañon below, holding his injured arm, his mind torn by a thousand difficulties, turned now, with his whole attention given to the pain in Miriam's face and voice. He strode over to her and looked down into her eyes.

"Miriam! Miriam! What have I done to you, my dearest?"

" 'You've given me some perfect hours and some exquisite dreams,' " she quoted. "But, oh, Hugh, that is not enough for me! I want every corner of your mind."

"I have tried to give it all to you, Miriam. I thought I'd convinced you of that."

A sudden spoke of orange light shot along the eastern sky. It lighted the two tense faces gazing at each other across that impassable chasm of personality which separates all human beings.

"You are sure that you love me, Hugh?"

"Very, very sure, Miriam."

"And that no matter what happens, you will believe in the bigness and fineness of my love for you?"

"Yes, Miriam."

She turned to stare at the cañon, which lay exposed now at their feet, then shuddered and went back to her old place against the side of the mountain.

After a moment she said:

"Hugh, it would be better for you to leave me here and go on after Jessie. I'll be quite safe.

"Jess is without food or water," said Hugh slowly. "I don't see how she could be such a fool."

"She's not a fool. She's much cleverer than I thought she was. I'm not thinking so much about her sufferings as I am about stopping the gossips who will gloat over your being alone here with me."

Hugh stood for a moment in thought.

"I don't like it—not any of it," he said finally. "My whole life now is made up of inhibiting every desire that is normal to me. If only I could be alone with you and my work—" He paused, clasping his right elbow and biting his lips with pain.

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"Hugh, have you hurt your arm?"

"A little. Now that the sun is up, perhaps you'd loan me that scarf and help me bind my arm across my chest."

Miriam snatched the knit scarf from her shoulders.

"Do you think it's broken, Hughie? Oh, my dear, your hand is terribly swollen! You mustn't think of starting out."

"Nonsense, Miriam! Tie me up. Then I'll get the grub out of the plane and be off."

She bandaged him skilfully. He would not allow her to go near the plane, but after long effort he managed to hoist out the wicker hamper of food that always accompanied the *Dinosaur* on its flights. Under his direction Miriam loaded his pockets with a two days' meager supply of chocolate, meat cubes and wafers. They filled a small canteen with tepid water from the tank in the plane, and Hugh was ready for the journey.

Had he not been handicapped by the broken arm, he believed that he could, with Miriam's help, have lowered himself from the ledge to the slanting wall below and thus have reached the floor of the cañon. But this was not to be considered; nor did he believe Jessie, for all her fine strength and agility, had been able to accomplish this alone. She must have found it possible to scramble up the mountain wall above the ledge, and this was the way Hugh purposed following.

Miriam watched him anxiously. His path decided upon, he turned to her.

"Miriam, you believe that I ought to go?"

"Yes, Hughie. Don't bother about me. I shall be perfectly safe."

"I know. Nevertheless, I can't bear to go and leave you. It would be wonderful to be alone here with you—for as long as they would leave us alone."

Miriam clung to him helplessly for a moment, hiding her face against his shoulder.

"We're on the lap of the gods," she whispered finally. "Kiss me, Hugh, and go, while I still have strength to send you."

He kissed her lingeringly, then turned toward the wall. Miriam gave a little sob.

"Hugh! Hugh! I shall be alone with my thoughts so long! Tell me that it's not altogether the strain of politics that gives your eyes the look they wear. Yet the look wasn't there before."

Hugh smiled.

"Why not let it be the result of politics? You wouldn't want it to be something mysterious, would you? You are the only person in the world who knows how I feel about my work and what giving it up costs me. But what does that matter? Some day—I don't know how—but some day you and I will be alone, lifting the curtain of the past. That's the glorious thought that's pulling me through."

"You'd give up politics quite happily?" asked Miriam. "Even though you have discovered your power to make people see things as you see them?"

"I can make them see only the Old Sioux Tract as I see it," replied Hugh soberly.

HE BEGAN carefully to work his way inch by inch up the yellow face of the mountain. Miriam stood watching him, her eyes tragic, her delicately cut lips twitching as though she found it difficult to maintain the poise habitual to her.

Hugh progressed upward slowly, very slowly. Now he found foothold in a crevice, handhold on a sage-brush root, and lifted himself to a projecting rock. Now he crawled gingerly along an upward-slanting crack—no handhold—his body pressed hard against the scaling-wall, one foot carefully following the other, every muscle cramping until he was grateful that the hospitable crack abruptly ended and he must take to the even more perilous way of tugging himself upward by sheer lift from root to root. His injured arm was agony. He was accustomed to scrambling perilously over the face of the mountains in his prospecting work, but not thus hampered. The pain made him giddy. Again and again he clung to a frail root, face pressed hard against the rock, eyes closed, wondering with an outward sense whether or not his hold must slip and he be dashed to pieces in the depths below.

Again and again he slid back—a foot, two feet—shale scraping his cheek and chin, only to bring up on some fragile promontory, and from there, after balancing for a ghastly moment, to go on with the ascent.

But he was inured to this sort of death-play, and his mind dealt mechanically with the difficulties of the climb while it gave its real attention to the fact that something far more hazardous, far more tremendous in its

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significance than this tense scaling of the mountainside was threatening him. He would not permit himself to acknowledge what it was that imperiled his peace of mind. He only allowed himself to face once more that sense of cosmic loneliness which always visited him when he felt himself out of step with that awful march of the ages which it was the fate of his mind ever to envisage. Miriam, Jessie, the Old Sioux Tract, Johnny, Pink were suddenly of no importance. He was utterly alone—he and his tiny span of life. So stupendously important to himself—of such trivial necessity to the ages. Yet of necessity so real, however small, that he must resume his step or know no peace. It was agony.

Above him the deep blue of the sky was cut clearly across by the yellow edge of the mountain wall. He did not look down, but kept his gaze fixed on the difficult horizon-line. Painfully but surely it drew nearer. At noon he lifted a weary knee to the final edge and rolled slowly onto the fair slope of the peak.

He rested for a little while, then got to his feet. He was on the summit of the highest peak of the range. To the east lay a chaos of orange crests and gold-and-purple mesas, with far slopes clothed in the dull-green splendor of the Forest Reserve. On either hand lay the long ridge that culminated in the mighty yellow mountain-head on which he stood. His station surely was suited to his mood—solitary, wind-swept, intimate to the infinite reaches of the sky. His slender khaki-clad figure, his tanned and thought-worn face were singularly in harmony with the aspect of the mountain-peak and with temper of his mind.

Hugh had no doubts as to the geography of his situation. He knew that this was the wild-horse country in which Red Wolf had found the gray stallion. He knew that due east, beyond and beneath the rolling sea of purple clouds that now concealed, now revealed the distant valleys, lay the horse-ranch whither he was sure Jessie was making her way. He believed he could make it himself by midnight, if he did not before that time reach a rescue-party sent back by Jessie. He ate sparingly, then started down the mountain-slope.

It was not yet sunset when he reached the bed of the creek at the foot of the peak. The creek itself was at this season only a narrow brook. That at other times it was a rushing torrent was attested by the drift-wood lying high up on the mountainside. The whole section was profoundly eroded. Grotesque pillars of sandstone rose abruptly on every hand. The banks of the creek were cut into a thousand fantastic shapes.

Hugh stared about him with a quick concentration of interest. The tilt of strata in this section of Wyoming was to the north. He had supposed the strata that lay so near the surface of the Old Sioux Tract would here, so much farther south, be too deep-buried for visual prospecting. And yet on the pillar in the shade of which he had paused was the impress of a palm leaf and of horsetail rushes—fossil vegetation of the strata that bore the dinosaurs. He glanced at the sun, thought of Miriam alone on the ledge and Jessie struggling on toward the horse-ranch, then set his teeth and held his course to the east.

AND virtue had its immediate reward, for almost at once, in the sandstone mesa which he began to climb, he came upon a deep-brown outcrop which brought him to his knees for closer observation. The brown mass was a fossil vertebra of huge proportions. Hugh studied it closely, his cheeks flushing with excitement. A rare and important find lay in this forsaken bank, he was very sure. He gazed at the outcrop lovingly, then rose, marked the locality well and made his way eastward over the burning, dancing sands of the bad lands. And he was shaken by temptation as a drunkard is shaken by the odor of alcohol. But he plodded on, his long jaw white and locked.

The sun had slipped behind the great head of Big Fang, and all the strange, distorted outcrops and erosions of the bad lands danced in fantastic mockery in front of Hugh's pain-blurred vision before he came upon Jessie with the rescue-party. For a moment he thought them only a part of the crimson, dancing landscape. Then he heard Jessie's voice.

"Hughie! Oh, Hughie!"

He leaned against a pillar and waited. Jessie and Babcock, the rancher, with a couple of cowboys leading extra horses, rode up to him.

"Hello!" said Hugh. "That was quick work, Jess!"

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Something far more hazardous than this tense scaling of the mountainside was threatening him. He would not permit himself to acknowledge what it was that imperiled his peace of mind.

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"Sorry about the accident," said Babcock, a brawny man in his late forties. "What's happened to your arm, Mr. Stewart?"

"Guess I broke it last night when the old bird skidded down the mountainside. Got a horse for me? I think the best move will be from the mountain-top. I can show you the exact spot."

"You go back to the ranch, Hughie, and let them take you in the car to Fort Sioux," said Jessie. "You must get to the doctor as soon as you can. You must be in misery."

"I am going on up with you all," insisted Hugh. "You'll need all the help you can get."

"You'll be no help in the shape you're in!" exclaimed Babcock. "The young lady up there ain't hurt, and is fairly husky, as I understand it. 'Twon't take any time at all to work her up off that ledge."

"Two of you must go down and come up with her," insisted Hugh. "The plane will have to be lowered into the cañon. I'll send Martin to oversee that job. Maybe I'd better get on to a doctor." Hugh's voice died away in a mumble of pain.

"Can you get back to the ranch alone, Hughie?" asked Jessie anxiously. "I think you need me more than Miriam does."

"Pshaw! Babcock might wander over Big Fang for two days without locating Miriam's ledge. You've got to guide him, Jessie. Give me a horse, Babcock, old man, and I won't hold you longer."

One of the cowboys helped him mount a horse, which gratefully and immediately picked up the home trail. Jessie watched him disappear into the dusk, then led the way on toward the peak.

Nine o'clock brought Hugh to the ranch, where Mrs. Babcock and her son Jimmy took him in hand. Jimmy, a boy of twenty, was deeply impressed by the importance of having in charge the injured nominee for the governorship. He would have embedded Hugh in a huge pile of cushions in the tonneau had he had his way, but Hugh, a little feverish and dreading the lonely jolting in the rear of the car, insisted on sharing the front seat with the young driver.

It was a fifty-mile run to Fort Sioux over a road of unbelievable roughness. Hugh made the trip endurable by talking to the boy, telling him of the discovery of the fossil vertebra and quizzing him regarding any possible remains he might have observed in the bad lands which bordered Big Fang. Jimmy was entirely uninformed but keenly interested, and Hugh found himself describing the fascination of paleontology with all the enthusiasm with which he had sought to convert a state-wide audience. Jimmy, before the trip was over, announced his intention of exploring the bad lands himself when Hugh became governor, of getting Hugh to incorporate all the section he found to be fossil-bearing into the reserved area. By the time they drew up at the doctor's door, Hugh had bound the youngster to him by the heavy bonds of hero-worship. He sent him to the Indian Massacre for a few hours' sleep, after having arranged for him to take Martin back with him to rescue the *Dinosaur*. Then he gave himself up to the doctor.

It was late in the afternoon before Hugh woke from the sleep into which he finally dropped after the doctor had helped him to bed in The Lariat. Johnny Parnell was sitting, smoking, by the cot.

"Well!" said Johnny. "What was the name of that horse that had wings? Don't you think you're crowding the old Gray Stallion to try to make him into one of them?"

"My nomination went to my head," returned Hugh.

"Or were you working out a new way to solve the woman problem?" Johnny went on. "Lord, Hughie! You sure have all the courage of ignorance. How's the arm?"

"It will do," replied Hugh. "Help me to shave, will you, Johnny? Did Martin get off all right with young Jimmy Babcock?"

"Yes, to both questions." Jimmy threw his cigarette out the window and picked up Hugh's razor. "Jimmy is the most important man in Wyoming without doubt. Incidentally, Grafton is back in town and took great interest in Jimmy's story of your mishap. He knows all about it, even down to the fact that young Babcock is now your partner in the bone-digging business."

Hugh grunted, "Much good may it do him!" and began his difficult toilet.

JESSIE and Miriam returned to Fort Sioux the next day in the *Dinosaur*, the latter somewhat battle-scarred, but, Martin insisted, as good as new. Fort Sioux, what

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with one aspect and another of Hugh's private and public affairs, entirely consumed with curiosity, flocked to meet the returned adventurers. Even Pink was there, still swollen with secret importance and blatant impatience. Hugh, making his way slowly through the crowd, saw Jessie and Miriam leave the machine, and, apparently on cordial terms with each other, smile as they greeted Pink. There was no mistaking the popularity of Jessie or, for that matter, of Martin and the *Dinosaur*.

BUT in all that crowd no one but Pink and Principal Jones greeted Miriam, who gave no evidence that she heeded the slight. She stood beside Jessie, looking delicate and very lovely contrasted with Jessie's athletic frame and strong, almost boyish face. Pink, having made way for the school-man, stared pop-eyed at Miriam; then, apparently with overwhelming inspiration, he crowded forward again.

"Listen, partner; are you worried about results?" he asked.

Miriam stared at him.

"What are you talking about, Mr. Morgan?" she returned in a voice of such cutting quality that Pink blinked and gasped.

Every one within hearing turned to look at him. Hugh, coming up just in time to hear query and counter-query, scowled and shouldered Pink aside while he greeted the two women. Pink, muttering to himself, withdrew among the crowd.

"Any trouble getting out, Miriam?" asked Hugh. "Are you awfully done up?"

"Not a bit, Hughie! I'm quite in shape to go on with my trip. I shall take the six-o'-clock west-bound this evening." Miriam spoke in a clear voice that carried far.

"You haven't much time to waste, then," said Hugh, looking at his watch. "Martin, will you bring Miss Page's suitcase to the station?" He turned back to Miriam. "I'll walk along with you."

He took her arm and, entirely indifferent to the goggling assemblage, lifted his hat to Jessie and led Miriam out of the crowd.

"Miriam," he burst forth, "you can't go this way! I want to tell you so much more than I could put into the letters."

Miriam gave him a curious glance, then smiled whimsically.

"No one was ever a more inconsistent lover than you, Hughie. But, after all, we understand each other. And nothing matters except that we keep ourselves for each other."

"No! No! That's not so! We're not children to blind ourselves with such generalities. Everything matters, however much we will it not to. Life demands unrelentingly that we get into stride with it, and for some of us it seems impossible to meet the demand. That's what I want to talk to you about."

Miriam looked up into his face with clear-seeing gray eyes.

"Hughie, it's what I'm fighting to do—get you into that stride. Never forget that, will you?"

Hugh nodded.

"Your sympathy has kept my soul alive. Without your letters I couldn't have carried on."

"And you feel that the carrying-on is worth while, Hughie? Tell me that you do."

Hugh hesitated.

"I don't regret what I'm doing. I do regret the necessity for it. That's not true, either." He paused and looked up at the brilliant cañon walls that so closely hemmed him in. Finally, he said slowly, "We're harassed by desires too big for us, by dreams that belong to the race, not to an individual."

Miriam's expression was troubled. For a moment she hesitated for words, then said, with sudden firmness,

"But I know I am right in my dreams for you."

Hugh unexpectedly smiled.

"There's nothing like knowing what you want, is there, Miss Assurance?"

Miriam smiled in response.

"Nothing, indeed, old 'I would I wot not what.' Hughie, have I hurt your campaign by coming? I was an idiot. But I really didn't realize what a little town like Fort Sioux could do to a woman."

"It's without mercy, once its thumbs are down for woman or man," said Hugh. "I don't care in the least whether you've harmed the campaign or not."

They had reached the station now, and they said good-by under the frankly watchful eye of the station-master. After Miriam's train had pulled out, Hugh returned to The Lariat, where Mrs. Ellis,

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Mrs. Morgan and Johnny Parnell were waiting to formulate the preelection campaign with him.

IF THIS were the story of an election fight, one could follow Hugh and Martin and the *Dinosaur* through several months of adventure, melodramatic enough to satisfy and satiate an inveterate motion-picture habitué. For Wyoming spent the summer and the early fall in the throes of a fight so complicated and so bitter that echoes of it sounded from coast to coast. And Hugh was the point on which the contending forces rallied.

In some aspects it was a sex-war, with the old guard determined that the women should not get a grip on legislation such as the passing of the Children's Code would give them. It was astounding, considering the generally admitted rightness of the code, how bitterly men fought it, how deeply they feared the prestige and power it would give the women. In other aspects, women stood against women. For there is no sex in cupidity, and that section of Wyoming which would be benefited by the Thumb Butte project fought Hugh with consistent venom. The sheep-raisers, the homesteaders, the mining men resented the rallying of the cattlemen to Hugh's banner, and within this group, actually comprising most of the male population of Wyoming, to say nothing of the wives and daughters, raged a particular and concentrated form of guerrilla warfare that smacked of the days of Sioux insurrections.

For the first few weeks of the campaign there was, as Mrs. Ellis had prophesied, a great deal of nasty innuendo about Hugh and Miriam. It for a time caused not a little disaffection among the women. But the opposition overplayed its hand in meanness, and the reaction that Mrs. Morgan had foreseen set in, the women coming to the rescue of the Gray Stallion's moral character with a gusto that caused this method of attack to be dropped very suddenly. Mrs. Ellis was relieved, but her fears were not entirely laid, and she said so to Mrs. Morgan. Whereupon Mrs. Morgan made a forecast. And for the only time in the history of the campaign Mrs. Ellis agreed with her without reservation. Said Mrs. Morgan:

"We can elect him in spite of the Page woman. But after he is governor he'll have to drop her. No one in the state will stand for domestic complications in the life of the state's chief executive."

But though the two were in such unique agreement, it is noteworthy that neither of them spoke of the matter to Hugh.

As the summer wore on, Hugh grew unutterably weary of the muck of the fight. His ears tired of the sound of hand-clapping. His first half-humorous, half-cynical amusement in turning Pink's insolent epithet into a party title changed to a contemptuous surprise that he could have been the author of an idea so inane. The exhilaration of mad flights in the *Dinosaur* high among the eagles became utter tedium. He found his mind turning with increasing longing to the old days of freedom, when even Jessie's constant gibing could not deeply mar the wonder of his work.

But neither Mrs. Ellis nor Martin, who grew to know him best, ever heard him complain. He had set his long jaw for the end in view.

By October his splendid nerves began to show strain, due less, perhaps, to actual physical exertion than to the more insidious effects of strenuous self-control. Mrs. Ellis watched his increasing symptoms of strain with considerable anxiety and talked with Johnny Parnell about the possibility of giving Hugh a week's rest. But Hugh refused all suggestions of this order.

One of the most important of all of Hugh's speaking engagements had been the most difficult to procure. It was in the town of Lone Spring, the center of a powerful Mormon community, and known to be hostile to the Gray Stallion. "Big" Elijah Nelson, the most influential Mormon in Wyoming, lived in Lone Spring. It had been he who had held the town against Hugh. And it was Johnny Parnell, with his powerful backing of cattle-raisers, who finally won a most grudging consent from Big Elijah for Hugh to speak in the Lone Spring schoolhouse, which was the town center. A tremendous amount hung on this consent, for if Hugh succeeded in carrying Lone Spring, he would carry the whole south country.

The day of the speech, late in October, dawned astonishingly mild for the time of year. The first snows were long overdue. An unwonted delicate blue haze lay along the crest of the cañon walls. The sun was

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hardly up when Hugh reached the hangar to find Martin too ill to fly. It was nothing more serious than indigestion, but the poor fellow had worked himself into a temperature at the thought of leaving Hugh in the lurch, and begged him to delay the trip.

Hugh, however, was entirely obdurate. He was throughly at home now with the *Dinosaur*, and the hard-won speaking engagement was much too important to be interfered with by any one's attack of indigestion. He sympathized with Martin, but went about tuning up the engine.

"Look out for snow," was Martin's last contribution. "This is a weather-breeder."

Hugh nodded and adjusted his helmet. He was about to climb aboard when Doc Olson galloped up, pulling his horse to its haunches beside the *Dinosaur*. He thrust a package into Hugh's hand, talking rapidly, but what he was saying was drowned by the terrific noise of the engine. All that Hugh could make out were the words: "Dr. Blackson—Lone Spring" and he nodded and thrust the parcel into the breast-pocket of his tunic.

HE WAS due to reach Lone Spring at five o'clock that afternoon. But at five o'clock the *Dinosaur* and Hugh were battling for life fifteen thousand feet in the air in the worst blizzard that Hugh ever had experienced. It came upon him about three o'clock, a Niagara of driving ice pellets, just as he had sent the *Dinosaur* upward to avoid the highest peak of the range. He might have made a landing at Indian Wells, which lay at the foot of the peak. But as the idea occurred to Hugh, he shook his head. "I'll get on with the war," he thought grimly. And from then until late that night he drove through a hades of wind and snow.

During half that time it seemed to Hugh that the *Dinosaur* was as helpless as a feather before a gale. Now it dropped in vacuum. Now it whirled in a cyclone spiral of ice pellets. Now it drove ahead, irresistibly forced by the wind behind. Now it hung motionless, held by the motor against a solid wall of wind and snow.

But when it seemed to Hugh that his numbed hands could do no more, without warning the snow cleared and the *Dinosaur* shot into open moonlight. The range, by a miracle, had been crossed, and a moonlit valley lay below. Hugh nosed the *Dinosaur* carefully downward. They were above a dense forest. He lifted the weary plane slowly and cruised carefully westward, a storm-tossed vessel seeking harbor. This was the Forest Reserve to the south of the range. Somewhere between its western border and a triple-headed peak known as the "Mormon Wives" lay the little town Hugh was seeking. He cruised for a long half-hour before he spied a spot of orange light below.

"Thank God for that!" he thought. "They are looking for me," And he began a careful descent.

He landed without mishap, running swiftly across the snow-covered plains to the huge log fire that blazed before the schoolhouse door. A dozen hands pulled him from the *Dinosaur*. Hugh saw as, in a red haze, a crowd of men, women and children surging about him. He swayed dizzily on his feet and was caught by a tall, bearded man in mackinaw and high riding-boots.

"Stewart, did you bring the medicine?" cried the man in a voice of indescribable anxiety.

"In my tunic." Hugh helplessly indicated his breast-pocket.

The man, one arm about Hugh's shoulders, extracted the package, suddenly clasped Hugh to him, crying: "Thank you! Thank you!" and, running through the crowd, leaped upon a horse and was gone into the moonlit night.

The crowd began to shout, "Now then, three cheers for the Gray Stallion!" and for a moment pandemonium reigned. Then, while the shouts still echoed in the snow-laden silence of the neighboring hills, the crowd fell upon Hugh, clasping his hands, pounding him on the back and gradually moving him into the warmth of the schoolhouse.

"But look here!" protested Hugh, with a grin, as they placed him near the stove and gave him a steaming cup of coffee. "This isn't the kind of welcome you led me to expect down here."

"We'd 'a' welcomed the devil if he'd done what you done, Stewart," said a grizzled-haired Mormon. "That boy is more to Big Elijah than his wife or his five daughters or his three ranches."

"He'll have a fighting chance now," said

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a little woman who stood in front of Hugh, expectantly holding the coffee-pot. "Doc said if he could get the antitoxin within twenty-four hours after he telephoned to Fort Sioux, he'd save him."

"Elijah Nelson has a son who's sick, eh?" asked Hugh.

"His only boy's got diphtheria," replied the woman; then she added, looking at Hugh wonderingly, "Didn't you know that?"

Hugh shook his head.

"I just knew that I was carrying some medicine from Doc Olson to your doctor down here."

"And you didn't know it was life or death for Big Elijah's son?" demanded Ike Turner, the grizzled-haired Mormon.

"No," answered Hugh apologetically. "Doc gave it to me the last minute. The motor made such a racket I couldn't hear anything but Blackson's name."

There was a sudden silence in the room.

"And you didn't know it was life or death?" insisted Turner.

Again Hugh shook his head.

"Then," demanded Turner, "why didn't you stop at Indian Wells instead of fighting through that blizzard up in the mountains? You must have made the wells early in the afternoon. And that was the god-awfulest storm the Unitas has showed up for years."

"I wish I could claim credit with Big Elijah." Hugh's voice was regretful. "But, as a matter of fact, all that I thought when I reached Indian Wells was: 'Let's get on with the war,' and I came on through."

"You came on through," repeated Turner in an awestruck voice. "And we thought you was just one of these kind of sissy professor fellows!" He turned to the breathless room. "Folks, here's a guy that just 'came on through' because he had a date here. As near as I can make out, that's his only reason." He turned back to Hugh. "Did you notice any storm up there, Stewart?"—this with a broad grin.

"You can bet there was a storm!" exclaimed Hugh. "The worst I've ever seen. Toward the last I thought the end had come for the little old *Dinosaur*. In fact, during the last four hours it was a gamble. I'm not so much of a driver, you know."

"He ain't so much of a driver!" repeated Turner to the crowd. "But he just came on through—through a life-and-death fight up there alone in hell— Why, gosh darn you, Stewart, you're a man!" He gave Hugh a blow on the back that seemed to set loose the room in an uproar of cheers and applause.

Hugh, weary with a weariness of which no man in the room could conceive the depth, listened and shook his head, his tired eyes turning appealingly from one to another. Finally the woman with the coffee-pot succeeded in making herself heard.

"Why not let him go to bed and make his speech to-morrow?"

"Right!" exclaimed Turner. "You're to stay at my house, Stewart. It's right beyond the schoolhouse here."

He hustled Hugh out the rear door and across the snowy fields to a log house from which a welcoming light shone. And Hugh slept until the tardy autumn sun was well above the mountains the next morning.

BIG ELIJAH appeared while Hugh was at breakfast. He strode up to put a big hand on Hugh's shoulder.

"The boy will live," he said.

Hugh lifted his tired face to stare deep into the Mormon father's eyes.

"I'm glad," he said simply.

Big Elijah's face twisted convulsively.

"You sabe, Stewart, that he's my only son, the only boy in a big connection, and nothing but antitoxin could save him."

Hugh nodded.

"They told me last night. Too bad I was delayed by the storm."

The Mormon's grip on Hugh's shoulder tightened.

"Stewart, you don't have to make any speech here. You've got Lone Spring hanging from your saddle now."

"You know I don't deserve such gratitude, Nelson. I didn't know it was your son or, really, that any one was seriously sick."

A grin suddenly appeared on Big Elijah's serious face.

"Sure, I know it—Governor! You don't have to make a speech down here. Gosh! You can have your bone corral if you want it, or anything else the Mormons can get you in Wyoming."

"He sure can!" exclaimed Turner, who came in to hear Big Elijah's last statement. "But, Elijah, you'd ought to let him make

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the speech. He's the kind of a nice fool that won't think he's earned our vote if he don't."

"All right," agreed big Elijah, then added, looking at Hugh keenly: "But just a short one. Some bad strain coming through that storm, eh, Stewart?"

"A little." Hugh grinned in his turn, "But not as much of a strain as trying to save a bone corral."

Both his hearers laughed and left him to finish his breakfast in the quiet of the kitchen.

Thus it was that the Mormon vote was made solid for the Gray Stallion.

HUGH'S return to Fort Sioux was uneventful. He landed there late in the afternoon of the next day and went directly to The Lariat. The storm had not been heavy in the cañon, but had raged sufficiently on the plains above to make it obvious that in the great altitudes of the ranges to the south it must have been a terrible affair. The telephone-wire to Indian Wells and Lone Spring was down, and so Hugh received an exceedingly warm welcome from Johnny Parnell, Red Wolf and Principal Jones, who were keeping shop.

It was while Hugh was trying to explain just why he had made only a fifteen-minute speech at Lone Spring that young Jimmy Babcock came in, obviously big with news.

"Thought, while I was waiting for the snows to melt, I'd come in and report, Mr. Stewart," he said, resting a wet riding-boot against the stove. "Say—I'm digging up that fossil you told me about above the creek-bed. He's lying on his side, sixty feet long. I got the head out fine. It's all covered with kind of big warts. The rest of the back-bone was busted into a million pieces, but the legs and tail—oh, boy! They'd give anybody the jimjams. The hip-bones——"

"Wait a minute, Jimmy!" exclaimed Hugh. "I thought you promised me that you'd only locate and not dig up the fossils. I told you the digging was an expert's job."

"Oh, I've done a fine job!" protested Jimmy, not without an injured note in his young voice.

"What did you do with the broken parts of the back-bone?" asked Hugh.

"I dumped those over the edge of the mesa. But the whole bones are all there." Hugh groaned. "What's wrong with that?" demanded Jimmy. "It's a wonderful fossil."

"Who told you that?" demanded Hugh.

"Mr. Grafton; but don't you let on you know he did."

"Grafton!" exclaimed Johnny Parnell and Principal Jones.

"Yes; he was interested when I told him about fossils that time I brought Mr. Stewart in. He's been out with me two or three times. He really located this bird. But I've done all the work."

Jimmy lit a cigarette defiantly. Hugh took a turn up and down the room and came back to put a sinewy hand on the youngster's shoulder.

"Jimmy, old man, you're a good scout, and I'm obliged to you. But will you promise not to touch that fossil again until I tell you to?"

"Sure I will promise!" Jimmie's self-respect was immediately restored by the petitioning note in Hugh's voice. "I took some pictures of it, and I'll send 'em to you when they're done. Real close-ups, so you can see the skull and some petrified skin, like Grafton told me to."

"Thanks, old man!" returned Hugh.

"That's all right." Jimmy rebuttoned his short leather rider's coat. "I'm going over to the Indian Massacre for supper. Anybody join me?"

"I might later," said Johnny Parnell.

"I'll wait for you in the office." Jimmy strode out, banging the door behind him.

The three men stared at each other.

"What's the great idea?" demanded Johnny. "They'd better hobble that kid or he'll run himself to death."

"They'll lose me a perfectly good dinosaur if they keep it up," said Hugh. "I suppose that fool of a Grafton thinks he's going to bribe me with the handsome gift of an alleged tyrannosaurus."

"I'm going out to pump young Jimmy dry!" exclaimed Johnny. He disappeared abruptly.

"Lord! I'd like to go out and see that job." Hugh turned to Principal Jones with a wistful smile.

The old man nodded.

"Tempts you; doesn't it, Hughie?"

"Yes. You can't dream how much. If it weren't for—" He jerked himself together. "Let's go to the Chinaman's

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for supper. I can't stand the thought of Jimmy's gab to-night."

Jones looked at Hugh keenly, but said nothing.

WHEN Hugh returned from supper he found Johnny Parnell standing before the stove. He did not greet Hugh, but walked very deliberately over to the door and locked it.

"What's the matter, Johnny?" asked Hugh.

Johnny's ruddy face was set.

"I don't want to be interrupted by the women folks. Hughie, you will recall that Jimmy took Grafton back to the horse-ranch with him, and that Grafton was there when they brought in Miriam Page from her night on the ledge."

Hugh, in his old place against the counter while he lit his pipe, nodded.

"Jimmy says that they knew each other and had a long talk together."

"What of it?" grunted Hugh, while his fingers tightened on his pipe-bowl.

"I don't know what of it, Hughie. But, I feel badly about what I picked out of Jimmy. He was in the stable while Grafton and Miss Page talked in the corral. He doesn't seem to have paid a lot of attention to what they said. But Grafton was reporting to her about some sessions he'd had with old Whitom. And Jimmy said she was evidently some one Grafton had to report to." Hugh stared at Johnny Parnell until the silence became for Johnny unendurable. "What of it, now, Hughie?"

Still Hugh did not answer. A dozen aspects of Miriam passed through his mind. Miriam in the launch, Miriam in the cave, Miriam in the saddle, Miriam grave, gay, girlish, mature, but always, Miriam the idealist, urging him on to fine achievement. And yet—and yet—vague queries about her business side, queries that never had become suspicions, now projected themselves clearly into his thought. She was ambitious — inordinately ambitious — for power, for prestige. She— Furious with himself for the thought, Hugh exclaimed tensely,

"Johnny, your suspicions are infamous—inconceivable!"

"I knew you'd feel like that. But, Hughie, if she is working with the Eastern Electric while apparently all for you, there's some kind of a double cross waiting for you, and I ain't going to rest till I get to the bottom of it. Hughie, aside from caring for her, do you trust her? A man can love a woman—every hair of her head—without trusting her."

"I couldn't," replied Hugh. "I trust Miriam Page as I would my own mother."

Johnny took a turn or two up and down the room, pausing, after a moment, in front of Hugh.

"You remember you sort of blackmailed me into coming in with you, Hughie, and that I made a break about Pink which you didn't follow up."

"Yes," Hugh replied.

"Haven't you ever thought it was funny Pink let you alone after you'd kicked him out of The Lariat?"

"To tell the truth, Johnny, I never gave him much thought. He is small fry in this big game."

"Well, I'll tell you why he's let you alone. I've been blackmailing him—about the cave matter. Now, didn't you ever wonder how Pink ever got in with the Eastern Electric Corporation?"

"Yes; I remember at first we all did. Then it seemed to me natural enough that they should have used him as they did."

"Perhaps it was," agreed Johnny. "I don't know anything to the contrary. But do you recall that when Miss Page and Jessie returned from Babcock's last spring, Pink he goes up to Miss Page and asks her is she worried about results? Now, wasn't that a darned funny thing for Pink to ask her?"

"I don't know that it was," replied Hugh carefully.

"All right. Maybe it wasn't darned funny. But at least it implied that Pink felt he needed comfort from her. Now, have you got the nerve to let me call Pink in here and blackmail him into telling us what he knows, if anything?" He watched Hugh with an anxiety he did not attempt to disguise. "God knows, Hughie, I don't want to add to your troubles, but we've got to know the truth about this, old man. Let's find out what we really are up against."

"I'm perfectly willing for you to pump Pink," said Hugh, slowly refilling his pipe.

Johnny strode out of the shop. During his absence Hugh stood with his unlit pipe in his hand, staring fixedly at the

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stove. When the cow-man came in, trailing Pink behind him, Hugh hastily struck a match and sat down, motioning the others to seats before the stove.

"Now what?" said Pink.

"You remember that little party in the cave, Pink?" asked Johnny. "Also the little matter of the gray stallion?"

Pink stared at Johnny truculently.

"I ain't saying. This isn't a court of justice."

"It sure ain't!" roared Johnny. "You know what it is. Do you remember the cave and the gray stallion?"

"Yes," replied Pink. "Don't get so het up, Johnny."

"Well, I am het up. Now, listen, Pink; so far, Hughie has no information about those matters. And I don't plan to give him any if you'll come through on something else. How did you get in touch with the Eastern Electric Corporation?"

"If I tell that, I lose the rest of my fee," replied Pink promptly.

"No, you won't. No one will ever know from Hughie or me."

"I wouldn't trust you." Pink shook his head firmly.

"Then Hughie gets facts from me about the cave and the gray stallion."

Pink turned purple.

"If I do tell," he said, "will you both swear not to give me away?"

"I will," replied Johnny.

"I will," said Hugh in a low voice.

"Well, I can trust you both, even if we are enemies. It was Miriam Page got me into it. Hang it! I just as soon get even with her for what she's done to Jessie. Jess is my only child, even if we don't get along. She got me in."

"When?" demanded Johnny huskily.

"On her first trip out here. I can tell you just how it was." Pink repeated the conversation that had taken place in the office of the Indian Massacre.

Hugh did not move. When Pink had finished, Johnny said abruptly:

"That's all, Pink. You can beat it now."

And Pink withdrew with what dignity he could muster.

Hugh sat with his pipe in his teeth, staring at the wall. Johnny watched him anxiously. But for five minutes the Gray Stallion did not stir. Then he suddenly emptied the pipe, put it deliberately into his pocket and slowly twisted his long, sinewy hands together with such passion that Johnny heard the bones crack. Assured that conviction had struck home, but with infinite compassion in his blue eyes, the cow-man went softly out.

And once more Hugh was alone in The Lariat with a crisis of the soul.

THE cost of growth! Dear God, the cost! The twisting, tearing agony of the sloughing away of this muddy vestment of personal desire that doth so closely hem us in! The infinite pain of learning that happiness and content cannot go hand in hand! World-pain this, common to human thought, and Hugh was undergoing it to the uttermost. But superimposed upon this was the personal agony that was the very peak of suffering. Miriam! Miriam! The gay, the lovely, the fine! Miriam, who urged him on to fight for the Children's Code. Miriam, who understood him as no other human being did. Miriam, who was worth sacrificing Jessie for, who was pure and disinterested in motive. Miriam, the lovely. God in heaven! There was no such Miriam!

Love that comes with youth is ecstasy. It is wine, flooding the veins, thrilling the heart, tinting the world with rose. And, like wine, its lift and urge must go, its poignant rapture ebb, leaving youth none the worse for its visit. But love that comes with middle age is not wine. It becomes the very heart's blood, and may not go without leaving middle age dead to emotion forever.

The hours slipped by Hugh till dawn. Then he rose wearily from his chair and made up a light pack for a camping-trip. He left The Lariat just as the sun came up. He saddled Fossil, tied the pack behind him, mounted and rode slowly through the quiet town toward the bridge.

Martin, coming out of his tent, yawning, called to him.

"Where to, Gray Stallion?"

"I'm off for a rest, Martin. Tell anybody who asks that I'm camping with Fred and Red Wolf up above the cave. But tell 'em not to follow me."

Martin eyed Hugh's face curiously and nodded. But as he watched the sagging figure cross the bridge, he shook his head and started out to look for Johnny Parnell.

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Hugh had no dramatic or drastic purpose in view. But he felt utterly broken and he knew, he told himself, that he would no longer carry on the fight for the governorship. The demands of the week before election were not to be faced. Come what may, he was going back to his work, to find rest.

But Hugh was not to reach the camp above the cave. For at noon he met Fred and Red Wolf, trekking homeward.

"Thought we'd come in for a while and get some news," explained Fred. "Anything wrong, Hughie?"

"I need a rest," replied Hugh. He eyed the sheep wagon and the horses. "How are you off for grub, boys? Got a few days' supply?"

"Sure!" answered Fred.

"Come along over under Big Fang. There's a fossil there that I want to look at."

Red Wolf grinned with satisfaction and turned the mule-team southwestward. Fred's expression was doubtful, but something in Hugh's face forbade him to speak, and he turned his horse after the wagon. Thus it was that Hugh took his rest.

A WEEK later Johnny Parnell located him. When Johnny's Ford slid into the camp, Hugh, in khaki, was engrossed in sorting the broken pieces of vertebra that young Jimmy had tossed over the mesa edge. His face startled the cow-man. He looked five years older and his eyes were too bright.

"Hello, Johnny!" he called. "What Jimmy did to this set of vertebræ!"

Johnny strolled slowly over to look at the fossil—a giant lying helplessly where it had fallen so many ages before. He stood scowling for a moment, then turned back to Hugh.

"You'd better come home with me tonight, old man," said Johnny.

"Not on your life, Johnny!" exclaimed Hugh. "I'll not leave here until I've made this dinosaur safe from Jimmy and his kind." Then he paused, and when he spoke there was a note in his voice that twisted Johnny's heart. "Johnny, I can't go back till I've straightened out my life."

The cow-man put his hand on Hugh's shoulder.

"Old-timer," he said as softly as his great voice would permit, "you'll have to go back. The Eastern Electric Corporation says you have in the last week broken the terms of Bookie's will and are no longer the owner of the Old Sioux Tract. Miriam Page is at the Indian Massacre. And, Hughie, yesterday they elected you governor of Wyoming!"

Hugh rose slowly to his full height, staring at Johnny, with consternation and unbelief struggling in his face.

"What brought Miriam to Wyoming?" he asked finally.

"I don't know," replied Johnny. "Jessie might be able to tell you. She and the lady have had several sessions. Hell sure has been popping this week. I'm afraid they've got you on the Old Sioux Tract, Hughie."

"Running for the governorship was exactly the sort of thing Uncle Bookie wanted to come from his will!" exclaimed Hugh.

"But you apparently chucked everything to return to your dinosaur." Johnny jerked a contemptuous thumb toward the recumbent giant. "Lord, Hughie! Were you off your head?"

Hugh did not reply. He looked from the fossil fragments at his feet northward, where lay the Old Sioux Tract. He was now bereft indeed! He stood so long in silence that Fred and Red Wolf, looming uneasily in the offing, finally beckoned to Johnny, who followed them behind the sheep wagon for consultation.

Hugh did not want to see Miriam. Miriam, as he had known her, was buried now with his mother and Uncle Bookie. The woman who had manipulated the preposterous scheme that had made him governor was a stranger to him. As for the governorship— He gave a sardonic laugh. He never would take office.

Johnny, returning from the fruitless consultation, found Hugh still staring at the northern horizon.

"Are you going to let the old tract go without a struggle?" asked the cow-man bitterly. "Wouldn't think it of you, Hughie, after seeing you in action for the past year. Running away, by hooky, because they hit you below the belt! Are you the same guy that flew through the blizzard to carry the medicine to Big Elijah's boy? Hughie, I'm ashamed of you!"

Hugh looked at his old friend curiously. Where, indeed, was the man who had

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flown through that terrible storm to keep a speaking date? Was he dead, too, with the other dead in whom he had had faith? What was there left in life to keep him alive?

He went back reluctantly to those hours in the blizzard. Why had he kept on when he might have alighted at Indian Wells? What was it that had earned him the overwhelming plaudits of the Mormons? He had not phrased the answer before, but he knew it well enough. Nothing appeals more strongly to the human mind than the quality of steadfastness. Loyalty in a peculiarly independent and virile form was a marked characteristic of Hugh. The sudden consciousness that this quality was his brought, for the first time in a week, a sense of warmth into his heart. " 'Steel-true and blade-straight,' " Miriam once had quoted to him. " 'The great Artificer made my mate.' " Here his heart sank.

Steel-true! He! To whom? To what? To Bookie? To Jessie? To Mrs. Ellis? To Wyoming? To himself? God in heaven! The answer to every query was "No!" Suddenly he twisted his hands together slowly, his tired eyes turning from the far orange reaches of the northward plains to Johnny Parnell, standing before him in an agony of apprehension.

Loyalty! To the land that had bred him. Was that not, after all, the only and ultimate reason left him for living? Hugh turned to Fred and Red Wolf.

"Can you boys finish off this job for me?" he asked.

"Sure can, Governor!" replied Fred, clearing his throat, something like moisture gleaming in his eyes. He could not know what had been passing in Hugh's mind, but the mental struggle had been too obvious not to be deeply painful to his old friend.

"Then I'll go back with you, Johnny," said Hugh.

Johnny heaved a stentorian sigh and strode over to crank the Ford.

IT WAS late in the evening when they reached Fort Sioux. Hugh slipped quietly into The Lariat to clean up before he should be discovered. But he had not finished shaving when Principal Jones burst into the shop. He was followed by Billy Chamberlain.

"Look here, Governor!" shouted Billy. "What's the great idea? Aren't your old friends good for a share, now you've gone up in the world?"

Hugh finished wiping his face, his tired eyes on Billy's shameless face. He buttoned the collar of his flannel shirt, knotted his tie and suddenly smiled.

"All right, Billy!" he said, holding out his hand. The barber took it with all the enthusiasm of the roused politician.

"Feeling O. K. again, Governor? Darn shame you had to turn sick the last week! Guess it was just as well. We put you over stronger with the talk about your sacrifice to the cause."

Principal Jones winked at Hugh over Billy's head.

"There is a crowd gathering, Hughie. Feel up to it?"

Hugh nodded.

"How about Bookie's will, Principal? Has anything been done—actually?"

"Didn't Johnny tell you?" asked the school-man.

Hugh shook his head.

Jones turned to Billy.

"Go out and tell that crowd that the governor will be along in a quarter of an hour. And keep folks out of here." Then, as the door slammed after the barber, he said carefully: "Hughie, my boy, they got to the judge months ago, evidently. They say the Sioux Tract was sold yesterday. We didn't know who the purchaser was."

Hugh whitened beneath his tan.

"The thing must be grossly illegal."

The school-man shook his head slowly.

"You haven't devoted yourself to The Lariat, Hughie. We all know that you've done exactly what Bookie hoped the will would make you do. But the will doesn't say so. And you have broken the literal terms."

"I shall fight it with every ounce there is in me!" ejaculated Hugh. "This is the reason for Billy Chamberlain's crowd coming through, eh?"

"I suppose so," replied Principal Jones. "Although some of it is the lickspittle reaction that was to have been expected."

There were cheers outside The Lariat. Hugh moved slowly toward the door. The school-man followed him with an anxious face.

"Sure you feel up to speaking this evening, Hughie?"

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"Don't worry about me, Principal," replied Hugh grimly, pausing with his hand on the door to look at his old friend. "I needed exactly this to restore me to full fighting trim." Then he turned the lock and went out. And cheers, torchlights and beaming faces absorbed him.

IT WAS midnight when Miriam found him alone in The Lariat. He was standing at the rear window, contemplating the moonlight on the ice-laden river. She walked the length of the room and stood beside him, waiting. Hugh looked at her. She was wearing brown furs. They made her beauty more pronounced than ever, her perfect grooming more noticeable, her ultrasophistication more obvious.

"Hughie," she said, "let's talk it all out."

"No!" replied Hugh.

She drew a quick breath.

"But, Hugh, you must not condemn me unheard. That's not justice."

"Very well. Was it you who brought the Eastern Electric Corporation here?"

"Yes. But let me tell you what my motive was."

"I know what your motive was. Did you make Pink Morgan your partner?"

"Not partner, Hughie. No! My tool." Miriam smiled ruefully.

"And did you force the sale of the Old Sioux Tract?"

"No, Hughie! No! I had nothing to do with that."

Hugh gave her a keen look. The old faith was indeed corrupted. He did not believe her. She understood the look, and her eyes filled with sudden fear.

"Hughie, it was for your own good—your own fulfilment. I did the rest, but truly I had no part in that sale. Things got out of hand. I came out here to stop it. But too late. And Jessie told me that you knew about her father and me. Johnny Parnell had told her. So I stayed on to explain to you. I knew that my presence could not stop the landslide for you."

Hugh, arms folded, jaw-line prominent in the combined moonlight and lamplight, did not speak. Miriam laid her warm, delicate hand against his cheek.

"Hugh!"

The old thrill rose to her touch, but his mind refused to follow. He moved a little away from her.

"Don't you realize, Miriam, what you've done to me?"

"I've made you governor of Wyoming," she answered quickly.

Hugh groaned.

"But the cost, Miriam! The cost!"

"The cost doesn't matter," she replied. "I've given you to the world! Who's counting cost?"

"I am," said Hugh grimly. "You were crooked with me, Miriam."

"No! Not that ugly word, Hughie! Please! You were like a little child that had to be developed by indirection. Surely you understand that much, my dearest. Oh, Hugh, don't look so! Your face breaks my heart."

She threw her arms about him, laying her cheek to his. For a moment the sweetness of her had its way with him. He felt his body relax against hers. But instantly, as though it were a body belonging to some one else, he recalled it, and put her from him with a gesture that was none the less firm for its sadness.

"You are not the woman to whom I gave my love," he said.

She moved away from him, lifting her chin with hurt pride.

"I have made my last advance, Hugh. You must make the next one yourself."

"You don't see, Miriam, that it's hopeless—that you've killed the thing I loved? I suppose you don't. Whatever in you made it possible for you to manipulate my life as you have makes it impossible for you to understand what you've done to me. And I did love you very, very much."

Miriam stared at him, consternation, unbelief, indignation and finally tragic portent following one another in quick succession across her expressive face.

"Hugh! Hugh! You wouldn't—you couldn't wreck our two lives for that! Why, think what I've done for you! You are governor of the state. You may become anything you will now."

"But you were crooked with me," insisted Hugh. "Those wonderful letters you wrote me! Marvels of duplicity. Your attitude toward my work, all the sympathy and quick perception! A crooked pose. Miriam, you've shattered me."

Her pride and dignity deserted her.

"Hugh! Hugh! I did it because I loved you so. I adore you! You know I do!"

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"You did it because you are ambitious and unscrupulous," said Hugh heavily. "Let's end the scene, Miriam. I can't stand much more. This past week has been hell."

"End the scene? But we can't end it! You are mine, Hugh—mine!" The ultra-sophistication dropped from her like a cloak, and it was the primal woman who hurled herself against Hugh, beating at his chest with her fists. "Mine!" she screamed. "No other woman's! Mine! Do you hear me, Hugh? I'll never let you go. I'll live with you in that terrible dinosaur cave if need be. But I'll never let you go."

Hugh clasped her fists in his long hands.

"Listen to me," he said, his low voice carrying above her hysteria. "Listen!" She had begun to sob terribly. "Listen to me, Miriam!" With a convulsive effort she stilled her sobs, and he went on: "You were in love with a man whom you could put and keep in a place of pomp and power. I'm not that man. I belong to the plains. And I shall return to them."

"I love you—you—you! Hugh Stewart—the man!" she burst forth. "And you belong to me. Always!"

"Listen to me, Miriam; no woman can possess me who can't possess my soul as well as my body."

"You are mine, soul and body, as I am yours," she sobbed. "I shall never let you go."

The sweat beaded Hugh's forehead.

IT WAS on this picture that Jessie opened the door. She came slowly down the room. Hugh looked up at her. Miriam went on sobbing.

Jessie, in her riding-clothes, tall, ruddy, her presence breathing a curiously palpable self-control, stood for a long moment in the lamp-glow before she spoke.

"After all," she said finally, "I am your wife. As such, I'm the keeper of your reputation. I've kept hands off of everything else, as you asked me to. But unless you actually divorce me, I shall no longer tolerate Miss Page's presence in this clandestine kind of thing. You haven't any private rights any more, Hughie. You belong to the state."

At Jessie's first word, Miriam whirled about, tear-stained face turned resentfully toward Jessie's. Before Miriam could speak, Jessie raised her hand.

"One moment! The situation is intolerable enough without adding a women's quarrel to it. I don't know how much there is between you and Hughie, Miss Page. I do know that you are going to keep away from him, now that he is governor. That is, until he divorces me."

"The crowd has left the hotel by now," said Hugh suddenly. "Let me take you over there, Miriam."

"Thank you. I prefer to go alone," returned Miriam dully.

She drew her furs high round her throat and left The Lariat. Hugh opened and closed the door for her. Then leaned wearily against the counter, his eyes on Jessie.

"I know that you're very tired," she said slowly. "I've not the least desire to start a scene at this hour of the night, Hughie. Only, as I said, I'm not able to endure the thing any longer. My patience is exhausted."

"I'm not particularly tired." Hugh shrugged his shoulders. "That is, no more tired than I've been right along. Jessie, have you understood from the first what Miriam Page was doing with me?"

Jessie's long, strong fingers clenched on the back of the chair before her. Her blue eyes, those far-seeing, shadowed, patient eyes, were violet now with some emotion Hugh made no attempt to fathom.

"Hugh," she said finally, "I've been enduring some punishment since Uncle Bookie's death. Magpie and I—well, we've ridden a good many miles on these plains, taking our medicine as it was measured out to us. Magpie isn't the half-trained bronco he was. He's been spur-broken these last months. I've brought him in day after day with his flanks bloody. And God—He knows that the flanks of my soul have been bloody, too! I hate Miriam Page. But I'm not wasting time on her. I've been finding out why Jessie Stewart has been a failure. And because I've been such a failure, I've nothing to say about Miriam Page. I'd been such a rotten wife it was only a question of time, anyhow, when some woman would get in on my neglected preserves. I hate her so much that I'm afraid to let my mind dwell on her. You'll never get another word out of me about her, Hughie."

"I've been taking punishment myself, Jessie."

"Yes, Hughie?"

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"I'm not the man I was, Jess. I'm an empty shell." Jessie eyed him keenly. Hugh went on heavily: "I know all of Miriam's part of the Thumb Butte matter. That's ended. I shall not see her again."

Jessie paled. Her eyes flashed with tears, but she did not speak.

"No woman," Hugh said slowly, "can ever get under my skin again. That's done with, thank God! But"—with sudden fire—"they'll never build the dam at Thumb Butte. Not while I'm governor of this state or after I've returned to my work. Mark it, Jessie."

"I'll mark it, Hughie. I'll mark it all." She turned the collar of her riding-coat up round her ears. "If Miriam Page turns your enemy, she'll stop at nothing. It's very cold to-night. Good-night, Governor."

"Good-night, Jessie."

He opened and closed the door for her as he had for Miriam, then went to bed.

MIRIAM left Fort Sioux on an early-morning train. Whether or not she would take Hugh's attitude as final, he did not even try to guess.

The modeling hand of Fate had not yet finished with Hugh. Nature had made him of fine material, but streaked with dross. She makes many such, and commonly the dross consumes the finer metal. But occasionally Fate decides that the pure material shall not be lost, and so she sees to it that life anneals such a one as Hugh relentlessly until, purged of extraneous matter, he faces the world, steel-true, indeed, and blade-straight. Fine in the best sense of the word a character must be that can emerge from this blast-furnace of Fate pliant, yet fine, delicately and intricately wrought, yet enduring, steadfast, fixed in beauty.

Hugh was now the governor of a great state. But as yet the cost had been too great for him to find satisfaction in that stupendous fact. He was, however, unshakable in his determination to go through with the matter.

He rose early the next morning and, while he dressed, stared meditatively at the walls of The Lariat—so familiar, yet so unfamiliar. The Lariat was a governor-elect's headquarters. How deeply rejoiced Bookie would have been! But what would he have said of the price Hugh had paid? Still intensely personal in his point of view, still concentrated on his own losses, Hugh still was tempting Fate.

And so Mrs. Ellis came in with a breakfast-tray from the hotel just as Hugh was starting for the Chinese restaurant. He took the tray from her and slid it onto the counter. Then the two shook hands.

"You are looking mighty fit for a successful campaign manager!" he exclaimed.

"I ought to. I've lost thirty pounds of excess weight, and I've slept for the past thirty-six hours. Your week's rest didn't do you much good, Hughie."

"Did I embarrass you by going away as I did?" he asked finally.

"Nice time to be asking me that!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellis. "No; it was the best thing you could have done. If we'd needed you, I'd have sent for you. Johnny Parnell knew where you were. Well, Hughie, what are you going to do about the tract?"

"Who bought it in?" asked Hugh.

"Nobody knows. Of course, they haven't got the charter yet. And, of course, they won't get it now." Mrs. Ellis rubbed one plump hand slowly with the other, looking thoughtfully out the window at a small boy struggling with a very large mule. When the struggle had passed from her vision, she said:

"Don't you think it's time you talked to me a little about the Children's Code? It's not altogether this eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth manner of politics that makes me ask you. Many things are going to be put over between now and the time you take office. And this is the way it's going to work: They know you'll force the code through. All that can be done in the next two months to extract the fangs from the code will be done. Hughie, I'm almost in despair over it."

For the first time since he had known her, Mrs. Ellis's voice broke weakly. He reached over to take her hands, and to say, between set teeth:

"I'll fight for the code as you fought for the Old Sioux Tract. As you've learned, I'm no politician. I can't seem to scheme things. But whatever other ability I have is yours. Mrs. Ellis, I'd do anything for you. Do you realize that you're the only person in the world, outside of Red Wolf and Fred, that has never tried to use me?"

"Why, Hughie, how silly! I'm trying to use you right now."

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"I don't call this 'using' me. You are too frank and honest about your plans. Tell me—what fang will they try to extract first?"

"I'm not sure. Let me check over in my mind."

Hugh finished his breakfast and lit his pipe, his eyes intent on Mrs. Ellis's face. She always showed a degree of emotion when the Children's Code was under discussion that she showed at no other time. Just at this moment there were tears in her eyes.

"My dear Mrs. Ellis," he said softly, "I wish you'd tell me all about it. You know exactly why I am in the fight. You've never told me why the code means to you what it does. I believe I could put more force in my blows if you took me into your inner confidence. I—I am very fond of you, Mrs. Ellis. And I need to feel that some one has confidence in me right now."

The tear slipped down into the dimple that suddenly appeared in Mrs. Ellis's plump cheek.

"Hughie, you aren't exactly down and out. Perhaps I'd better remind you that you've just been elected governor and that no man has ever gone into office in this state with so enthusiastic a group of followers."

"But," insisted Hugh, "that isn't telling me what the Children's Code really means to you."

"There's nothing complicated about that," said Mrs. Ellis very soberly. "But it hurts me to talk about it. This is a pioneer state. Pioneering works unutterable hardships on women, because they are nature's specialists. They have to bear the children. But Wyoming is a pioneer state that has access to every resource of civilization. There has been no time in the past forty years when Wyoming could not have given state aid to any prospective mother, no matter how remotely she might have hid herself in the ranges. But her politicians would not have it so. Hughie, when I was a girl of twelve I was alone on the ranch with my mother. We were too poor and too ignorant——

"She died in childbirth—me, alone, a little girl, trying to help her, trying to save the baby—to save her. I failed. I never can forget it—never get over it—never forgive civilization that it can let such things, such unnecessary things, come to women and children."

Hugh, deeply moved, stared out the rear window at the immutable line of the cañon. He never had come in contact with the agonizing facts of birth. He had thought very little about them. But suddenly he found himself suffering with that little dimpled girl of twelve. Suddenly he saw women from a profoundly different angle. After a moment he said slowly,

"Mrs. Ellis, will they attack first the establishment of the county maternity centers?"

"What makes you ask that?" asked Mrs. Ellis, wiping her face and looking at him with the old battle-fire in her eyes.

"Big Elijah asked me last night to use influence to get the new state asylum for his county. And he mentioned that he thought the appropriation for that would be cut, because he'd heard there was a bill being worked through giving millions to a medical school and model hospital at Cheyenne. They'd kept it very quiet, but it had reached his ears when they tried to get Mormon backing. Old Charlie Whitom is the father of the bill."

"Exactly!" said Mrs. Ellis through set teeth. "He'll never forgive me for helping you. So he's going to ruin the code for me."

"No; he's not going to ruin the code for you." Hugh rose slowly. "He and the rest of those buzzards will find something else to feed on. Let's send for Big Elijah and Mrs. Morgan."

HE WENT to the telephone, which now shared the counter with the still much too inadequate cash-register and shortly the Mormon leader appeared. He took off his hat elaborately.

"Good-morning, Governor!"

" 'Stewart' is good enough, Nelson," said Hugh, smiling.

"As far as I'm concerned, sir, you are the governor," replied Elijah. "Howdy, Mrs. Ellis?"

"Howdy, Elijah? How are Mary and the boy?"

"Well, young Lije hasn't quite got on his feet yet. His heart is bad after the diphtheria. Doc says he'll outgrow it. Worries me. Doc Blackson is in Salt Lake this winter, and I'd like to have the boy within easy reach of a doctor. To say nothing of Mary. We hope there'll be a baby at our home by Christmas. Do you think I can

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get her to go into Salt Lake or come up to Cheyenne, where she can get care? No; she won't leave home."

Mrs. Ellis gave Hugh a quick look. He was scowling in a puzzled way.

"That doesn't exactly fit in with the psychology of what you were telling me, Mrs. Ellis," he said.

"Yes, it does," she contradicted. "Nine women out of ten have a horror of being away from their homes and their husbands at such a time. Hence the code-idea of county centers, from which the doctors and nurses can go to the mothers."

Elijah looked up with interest.

"Is that the code?"

"Heavens, Elijah! You Mormons helped to kill my bill. Don't tell me you didn't read it."

"No, I didn't," admitted the Mormon belligerently. "A lot of new-fangled notions to eat up the public funds—that's what I thought it was. And I'm not sure now that it ain't."

"And yet," said Mrs. Ellis, "if the code had been in force this fall, you'd have had a county hospital to have rushed your boy to and not have had to trust to the bravery and persistence of a man you didn't trust."

"I trust him now," grunted Elijah. "Well, what is the idea of this here Children's Code?"

"I won't go into but one section of it now," said Mrs. Ellis. And she explained to him rapidly that portion of the code which was based on the thrifty and efficient plan of the German Red Cross in times of peace.

Elijah was much impressed.

"Never heard of such an idea in all my life," he said. "Probably wouldn't cost as much as that big affair they're planning to put over in Cheyenne."

Mrs. Ellis was exasperated.

"Will you tell me," she demanded, "how a supposedly intelligent man could close his ears to a thing that's been discussed as long and as violently as this code has?"

"It didn't bite close enough home till now," answered Elijah, grinning complacently. He winked at Hugh. "The governor never read it, either, I'll bet."

"I didn't read it till Mrs. Ellis made me," confessed Hugh.

"Dead bones being so much more important than live babies!" snorted Mrs. Ellis. "Well, Elijah, what are you going to do about it?"

"You mean about Mary?"

"Yes; Mary—indirectly. Directly, the code," Mrs. Ellis was sitting bolt upright now. "You must not think—" she was beginning, when Mrs. Morgan came in. She nodded to the others, then offered Hugh her hand with an air of deference no one before had seen her wear.

"We are very proud of you, Hughie," she said.

"Thank you, Mrs. Morgan," replied her son-in-law.

"I'm honestly sorry about the Sioux Tract." Mrs. Morgan glanced curiously at Elijah. "I suppose that is what you want to talk about."

"Not at the moment," answered Hugh. "I only want to say that they'll never build the dam at Thumb Butte if I have to dynamite every pound of concrete that's poured in. Just now we are going to lay plans about the Children's Code."

HE ASKED Elijah to repeat his last-night's statement, to which Mrs. Morgan listened in her eager way.

"Well," she said, "it's gone further than I thought it had. What we've got to do is to buy them off."

"Buy them!" Elijah laughed. "Woman, you are too ambitious. What would you buy them with—stone birds?"

Every one laughed with the Mormon. But Mrs. Morgan insisted, when quiet was restored:

"I mean what I say. There must be something in the control of the Federation of Women's Clubs that the Whitom gang could use. I wonder what it is."

"The Whitom gang wants loot—nothing else!" exclaimed Elijah.

"Don't be too sure of that," said Mrs. Ellis. "They all are well-to-do men. Their price may not be in money."

"I suppose, as a matter of fact, each man's price is different from every other one's," suggested Hugh. "Which makes Mrs. Morgan's proposition impossible."

"Not at all!" contradicted Mrs. Ellis. "For the second time in history I'm about to agree unequivocally with Mrs. Morgan. There probably is one single thing on which all their hearts are set. We've got to find out what that is."

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"I can name one thing right now," said Elijah. "Offer to put Hugh Stewart out of state politics, and they'd give you the Children's Code."

Every one laughed again.

"Jokes aside," said Mrs. Ellis suddenly, "even if we wanted to do such an absurd thing, I doubt if we could do it. The ranchers of this state want him. The young men of education want him, and the women want him. He can't be moved in and out of politics like a wax figure."

Hugh moved impatiently.

"Let's get down to business about this matter," he suggested.

AND forthwith the impromptu committee plunged into possible plans for trading with the enemy.

Hugh, as he had said, was useless in the promulgation of political intrigues. So little was expected from him in the conference, but for once Mrs. Ellis and Mrs. Morgan had nothing feasible to suggest. After a fruitless hour, during which The Lariat was bombarded by impatient politicians and admirers, Elijah suggested a recess.

"If I've got to help on the Children's Code, which will take an awful lot of explaining down my way, you've got to let me get out and talk and think by myself. To tell the truth, I'm not used to conferring with women around."

Mrs. Ellis nodded, and Elijah, like a boy freed from school, bolted. Johnny Parnell entered as the big Mormon went out, and demanded to know the purport of the conclave. Hugh explained. Johnny listened, smoking thoughtfully.

"Sheep for cows," he said finally. "Send for Jessie."

The others stared at him, and Johnny his great voice carefully casual, his manner as indifferent as if he had not prayed for this moment for months, took his pipe from his mouth and said:

"The whole Whitom gang has been working for three years buying in sheep-lands down on the Colorado border east of the Roaring Chief. The Lord knows even I'll admit a cow couldn't live in the whole of the territory. Get the cow-men to move the sheep-line ten miles nearer the river, and they'll give in on the Cheyenne Hospital."

"Johnny Parnell, you know as well as I do," snapped Mrs. Ellis, "that a cow-man would shoot you if you'd make such a suggestion."

"Sure he would!" boomed Johnny. "That's why I said, 'Send for Jessie.' Let me give you folks a little bit of news. Mrs. Morgan, what's Jessie been doing during this campaign?"

"She's been acting as your secretary and assistant up there at the ranch. And I've noticed that she's very popular with the cow-men."

"Popular!" snorted Johnny. "Let me tell you that Jessie Morgan is the whole works in the association. Why, she has no real idea herself of the influence she has. She's got her mother's gift for politics with—excuse me, Mrs. Morgan—a kind of natural frankness and friendliness that her mother hasn't. More than that, she's a real Wyoming girl. She knows horses; she knows cattle. She's learned the problems the fellows that raise steers have, and she's interested heart and soul in them: And, on top of it all, there ain't a man that's met her up there that isn't more than half in love with her. Tell Jessie to get that concession from the cow-men, and she'll get it."

The two women looked at Hugh. He was spared giving an immediate answer, for Johnny gave a sudden whoop.

"There she goes now, on Magpie, back to the ranch!" He rushed to the door and roared: "Jessie! Jessie!" in tones that shook the walls of The Lariat.

Jessie turned her horse, dismounted and came slowly into the book shop. She greeted them all with an inclusive nod.

"Jessie," exclaimed Johnny, "will you undertake to get our association to run the sheep dead-line ten miles nearer Roaring Chief, below Whitewater, in return for the Whitom gang giving up the Cheyenne hospital and school? Mrs. Ellis says that's hurting her Children's Code."

Jessie knocked the snow from her coat with her heavy gauntlets and looked from Johnny to Hugh.

"I'll do nothing active in this campaign unless Hughie asks me to," she said.

Mrs. Morgan started to speak. Mrs. Ellis laid her hand for an instant across her assistant's lips, giving her at the same time a look that temporarily paralyzed Mrs. Morgan's faculties for interference. Johnny rolled a cigarette with infinite pains.

Hugh looked from Jessie to the walls of

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The Lariat, at the familiar book-bindings, at the Indian curios, at Bookie's old silver spurs, carefully preserved on the top shelf. The Lariat! Here the loneliest and the sweetest hours of his life had been spent. Here Miriam had come to him.

After a moment he turned to look again at Jessie. She was watching the ice cakes on the river. "Frankness and friendliness," Johnny had said. Yes; they were there, obvious even to his wearied gaze. But—the old resentment welled up. There had been no friendliness in the old days when she had laughed at him, been ashamed of him and his work. The old days! How long ago they seemed!

And yet he could not bear the idea of taking help from Jessie. Then, for the first time, he asked himself honestly, "Why?" And he answered himself honestly. Only half of his attitude was due to the old resentment. The other half was based on a furtive shame. How could he take this sort of assistance from his wife when there had been Miriam? Suddenly he shook himself with impatience. Jessie was generous. Couldn't he at least be not ungenerous? But his face was pale with the stress of the struggle when he looked at his wife and said in a low voice,

"It will be very kind of you to help us, Jessie."

Jessie turned to Mrs. Ellis.

"You'll have to give me more definite information," she said.

Hugh picked up his cap and mackinaw.

"If you can go on without me, I'll go out and look up Judge Proctor."

"The judge went up to Cheyenne yesterday," said Jessie.

"There'll be some one in his office I can talk to," insisted Hugh. He nodded and went out.

BUT there was no one in Judge Proctor's office who could or perhaps would give him any information about the will. The whole office was cloaked in silence and mystery. Nor was Hugh given much time to pursue his investigations. He was carried off that noon to a dinner given by the cattlemen and miners which lasted most of the afternoon. It was not merely a congratulatory affair. Hugh's election, meaning in most ways so little to him, was a matter of great and growing portent to these men who made their living literally from the soil of Wyoming.

It was the first time that a man of Hugh's mental type had been placed in high office in the state. Only half convinced as to his fitness at first, they had grown at last to feel a fanatical sort of faith in him. They felt that because of his education and his peculiar profession, and because of his motive for coming into politics, he was a man above the common run of men.

The men at this dinner loved Wyoming. And they felt that a great moment had arrived for the state—that with Hugh's election they had inaugurated a new era—an era of something higher, nobler, more far-seeing than they had known before. And the important aspect of this dinner for Hugh was that for the first time he realized this fact. The realization came as he listened to the closing words of a speech by Coppy Cheney, the toastmaster.

"Some day" he said, "we are going to educate our children so they'll be fit for public service. Not only that—we'll educate them so that they'll feel obligated to give some kind of public service during their lives, it doesn't matter how lowly or how high that service is. And so that they'll give that service without desiring or demanding a personal reward. A year ago I'd have said that kind of an education and that kind of a result were impossible. I didn't know the Honorable Hugh Stewart then.

"Oh, yes; I know you all might say he was out frankly for a mighty concrete reward—the Old Sioux Tract. Gentlemen, he wanted that tract for the state of Wyoming. He had not a personal desire in connection with it. Instead, he sacrificed every personal desire he possessed to make that fight to save that strange graveyard to future generations. And he now has lost that tract.

"I offer you, gentlemen, the name of our next governor, the new kind of American—the American who gives political service at the sacrifice of self."

Hugh was too much moved by this speech and by the tumultuous applause that followed to reply. He could only bow, with his charming, wistful smile. But his emotion was not all that of gratified vanity. He was twisted by that same sense of shame, of lack of generosity that had caused him to

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She looked very young, now that her face was not distorted. Her eyes were very blue. She looked up at George with a smile unutterably sweet.

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ask Jessie for help that it was deeply bitter for him to accept.

SOMETHING new that was stirring in Hugh prevented him for a long time from starting the fight over Bookie's will. It was several weeks after his return to Fort Sioux that he received a telegram from Salt Lake City, saying that Miriam Page was desperately ill of pneumonia, that there was no hope of her recovery and that she asked Hugh to come to her without delay. The telegram was signed by her doctor.

Hugh was deep in a conference with Mrs. Ellis in The Lariat when the telegram arrived. He read it through twice, then laid it on the counter and stared at Mrs. Ellis while a sense of irreparable loss shook him. Yes; it was now, after the weeks spent in severing his life from Miriam's, that an actual realization came to him of what that loss meant. After all the struggle, all the firm decision, the utter determination, the hand of Death woke to life all the old fires.

"I must go to Salt Lake City," he said abruptly. "I must start now."

"What is the trouble?" exclaimed Mrs. Ellis.

"A personal matter," replied Hugh. "I've missed the limited. Martin must take me in the *Dinosaur*.

"But, Hughie," protested his manager, "if it's as important as that, you ought to tell me what it is."

"I can't tell you. You must make my excuses. I'll be back as soon as possible."

"A very risky trip to take in the air-plane in such weather as this. I know it's clear, but too frightfully cold, and if you have to come down for any reason——"

"None the less," insisted Hugh, pale-lipped, "I must go." He started to his feet.

Johnny Parnell, striding in, put his hand on Hugh's shoulder.

"Hold on, Governor!" he said. "I want to tell you something. Did you get a telegram just now from Salt Lake?"

"Yes," replied Hugh. "I've got to leave for there at once. By the *Dinosaur*."

"Governor," said Johnny, with the note of deference he now always gave his old friend, "I heard that you'd got that telegram. I heard from Billy Chamberlain, who knows Morse and was in the ticket-office when the message came."

Hugh drew himself up.

"Because I have no privacy," he exclaimed, "my friends should not feel warranted to intrude on my personal affairs!"

"The point is, Governor"—Johnny was red with earnestness—"that you haven't any personal affairs any more. And I've got to intrude, because it ain't intruding. Hughie, you mustn't go to her."

Hugh's jaw-line showed white.

"I am leaving for Salt Lake as soon as Martin can get the plane tuned up. Don't interfere with me, Parnell."

"I've got to!" insisted Johnny miserably. "Even if she's dying, you must not go. Lord, I wonder what she was doing in Salt Lake, anyhow!"

"Coming up here to make mischief, of course," muttered Mrs. Ellis, suddenly putting two and two together. "The Christmas-eve celebration to-night, too!"

"Be silent!" Hugh's voice was one of controlled fury.

"I will not be silent!" returned Mrs. Ellis. "Hugh Stewart, you cannot go. You cannot enter office with this episode attached to your name. It will block your best efforts for days."

Hugh turned to the coat-hooks on the wall and pulled himself rapidly into his heavy air-man's outfit, his two friends staring impotently. When he was dressed, he looked at them with a splendid sort of defiance.

"I'm sorry," he said, and went out.

He helped Martin groom the *Dinosaur* for the trip. Martin, knowing of the telegram, asked no questions but worked with disapproval in every line of his face. Before the usual crowd that dogged Hugh and the air-plane could gather, they were off.

Brilliant blue of sky. Iridescent white of plains. Bitter cold of air. Hours of ear-shattering throbbing of the engine. Hugh made no attempt at consecutive thought. He was weary of that. He gave himself over to grief. Not the grief that bowed him at his Uncle Bookie's death. Not the grief that, commingled with anger and chagrin, had made his week with Jimmy's dinosaur a week of torment. It was the pain of a man over the death of a woman whose beauty of mind and body he has loved. Eyes dry and bright, teeth set hard, fists clenched within his fur mittens, he sat silent through all the long, bright afternoon.

At sunset they sighted the fuel-station

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which marked the end of the first third of their journey. It was a lonely spot, set deep in sheep-country, supplied by an oil-tank that worked its way up on the rough trails used by the sheep-herders. The *Dinosaur* descended to reload with gasoline.

THEY were in a wide valley, surrounded by snow-covered peaks. But there was no snow in the valley. There were great reaches of orange sand, thick-set with gray-green sage-brush, reaches that were cut by draws and little hills—little rounded hills studded with the wind-tortured cedars of Lebanon. A mile or so up the valley from the tiny log fuel-station, a sheep wagon crowned the highest hillock, black against the sinking sun. Black, too, against the evening glory was a gently moving, faintly tinkling ocean of sheep—thousands upon thousands of them—following their shepherd, an equestrian in bronze.

When Martin had stopped his engine before the oil-tank, he said to Hugh in a tone that was as nearly surly as he ever had used to the Gray Stallion,

"You have to give me half an hour to get after that cylinder that's been missing the last few miles."

Hugh nodded, removed his goggles and stood staring up the valley at the slow-moving flocks. Christmas eve! How like a Tissot—the sheep, the little hills, the twisted cedars. Hugh's mind deserted Miriam's death-agony for a moment and went back to his mother—his tall, gray-eyed mother—and the Christmas star—the Star of Bethlehem, under which she always told him the matchless tale of the Babe in the manger. The door of memory swung wide. The unspeakable fragrance of these nights with his mother touched his tortured mind. Again he felt the nearness to a great glory and that great world-tragedy, felt his mother's passionate love for him and his for her—how different, how very different from this later love!—felt again his mother's overwhelming desire for him to achieve something as stupendous as that other mother had desired for that other and deeply tragic child.

Suddenly Hugh bowed his head and groaned aloud. Waste! How he had wasted himself! Jessie! Miriam! And why? What was the keystone to his failure?

Hugh did not know.

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The valley was in purple dusk. A light like a huge silver Chinese lantern glowed from the highest hillock. It must be supper-time within the canvas-covered sheep wagon.

Martin tinkered steadily at the recalcitrant cylinder. Hugh tramped impatiently back and forth.

The glow in the east faded into purple. A star pricked forth, huge, lambent. There was the sudden sound of a galloping horse, and the shepherd appeared within the glow of Martin's lantern. He was a young fellow in blue overalls. His tanned face in the flickering light was stark with fear.

"Say, strangers," he panted; "when I went home to supper just now, I found my wife sick. Looks like the baby was going to be here a month ahead of time. It's awful! She's going through hell up there. She'll die if we don't get a doctor. Does—does either of you folks know anything about birthing a baby?"

"No!" replied Hugh and Martin together.

"God!" cried the sheep-herder. "How long would it take you to go up to Fort Sioux for the doctor in that thing."

"Six hours for the round trip," replied Martin.

The sheep-herder clutched his hair.

"She'll be dead by then."

Martin said suddenly:

"This here is the Honorable Hugh Stewart, the new governor of Wyoming. He's on his way to the bedside of a—a friend that's dying."

The man stared at Hugh, pulled off his cap and replaced it, then gasped:

"How should I know? But I can't help it if it was the King of England"—with a quick sob. "It's my wife, and she's in labor. I've got to have help."

It was only a minute that Hugh stood silent. But in that moment his whole lifetime of habit in thought fought with the new Hugh agonizing in Fate's crucible.

Miriam, dying, leaving behind her nothing but Hugh's aching heart. The sheep-herder's wife, ignorant and coarse in all probability, but fighting to perform the woman's racial task.

"Is your engine in shape, Martin?" asked Hugh finally.

"Good enough."

"I'll go back for Doc Olson," said Hugh.

Martin's voice was husky as he said:

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"No, you won't, old-timer—excuse me, I mean, Governor. That engine is on the bum, and you can't handle it. I'll go."

Hugh nodded.

"Get going, then, Martin!"

"You mean," gasped the sheep-herder, "that you—you are going to put off your trip for my wife?"

"You'd better get back to her," said Hugh. "I'll follow you as fast as I can."

He helped Martin refill the tank, and stood for a moment watching the *Dinosaur's* great wings dwindle into the gleaming Christmas heavens. Then he started rapidly toward the silver light of the sheep wagon.

HUGH opened the door of the sheep wagon. The sheep-herder was bending over the bench at the opposite end.

"Georgie! Georgie! Help me!" his wife sobbed.

"What shall I do, Dora? What can I do?"

There was only a scream of agony from Dora. Hugh, trembling, lips set, stuffed some wood into the stove, saw that the supply was low, and would have gone out to forage for more had not George turned his head and said to him hoarsely:

"Wring another hot towel out of that water. She won't let go my hands."

There was a dish-pan simmering on the stove. Hugh seized a steaming towel and wrung it, then crossed with it to the bed.

"Now bring in an arm-load of wood from under the wagon before she needs another," said George.

Hugh leaped to the task, then twisted out another scalding cloth. Dora writhed and groaned. George, holding her hands, soothed her steadily.

It was a losing fight. If Dora knew, as she probably did not, what might have been done to help her, she was in an agony that precluded giving coherent directions. And, anyhow, it is not a part of our extraordinary system of education that women shall know what to do in the great and inevitable emergency. George, in his life spent among herds, might have helped had he not been rendered useless by love and terror. The two men, sweating in sympathy and fear, struggled impotently, however, to relieve her pain. About two hours after the *Dinosaur* had left, the baby was born. They rolled it in a blanket, laid it at the foot of the bed and gave all their attention to Dora. But she was beyond their help.

She looked very young to Hugh, now that her face was not distorted. Her eyes were very blue. She looked up at George with a smile unutterably sweet; then her lids fluttered down. She never lifted them again. George, his face buried in the pillow, his cheek against Dora's, did not stir. Hugh stood rigid beside the stove until a sudden sense of chill bade him start the fire again. Then he looked hesitatingly from the little bundle at the silent mother's feet to George's motionless form. He could not bear to disturb the man. He lifted the baby, bent his head over the tiny lips, felt a flutter of breath against his cheek, and with a thrill such as he never before had experienced, he sat down by the fire and held the child close to its warmth. Some stirring instinct told him that if he could keep it warm, it would live until the doctor arrived.

"George," he said softly. "George, old man!" The sheep-herder raised his haggard face. "Come over here and keep the baby warm while I chop more wood."

"Put it down on the bench," said George dully, turning back to Dora.

"No, George! It needs to be held close to the heat. Come, old-timer; we'll put it through, won't we? It's her own flesh and blood we've got to save."

George rose stiffly and held out his arms for the child. Hugh pulled the blanket gently over Dora's face, then slipped out to the cedar logs behind the wagon. He stood for a moment looking up at the Christmas star. His mother. Miriam. Jessie. God! What was life? Why was it? Whither did it tend? What was the reason for that pitiful and unnecessary sacrifice within the sheep wagon? Suddenly he saw a dimpled child of twelve fighting for her mother's life as he and George had fought for Dora's—a child of twelve witnessing in her mother the agony that had shaken him to the depths of his being. He slowly set his long jaw in the starlight and returned to the homely task at hand.

By the Eternal, he would save this baby if his unskilled hands could do it!

What effect will this pitiable episode have upon Hugh's future course of action? See the concluding instalment of "The Lariat" in July EVERYBODY'S—out June 15th.

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Saving San Clementine

Civic Reform Is a Favorite Occupation of the Moral Element, but When the Underworld Goes In for It We May Expect to Be Startled by the Originality of Its Methods

By Louis Weadock

IT COULD not have happened in New York, for in New York the gambling-house of Colonel Bill Timmins was his castle. The front door of the brown-stone citadel was like the door of an ice-box; the windows were barred with iron and screened with steel; the steel door in the rear had begun life in the vault of a bank, and the mat in front of it and the mat in front of the front door were wired to electric alarms.

Also, there was an automatic elevator which ran to the roof, from which the besieged, when hard-pressed by the besiegers, escaped to lower roofs by means of a rope ladder. But this ladder was used only when the storm troops of police were commanded by a raider so slightly acquainted with the terrain or so well acquainted with Colonel Bill Timmins that, basing his attack upon the theory that the house was roofless, he concentrated his forces upon the impregnable front door. When the shock troops were led by some police strategist whose head was hard as his heart, the lower roofs were never left unguarded. In such cases, the rope ladder stayed indoors, and so did Colonel Timmins and his wheel-man, his faro-dealer, his hazard expert, his house poker player, his lookout, his cook, his waiter and his guests.

The deliverance of the guests was seldom long delayed. For in Colonel Timmins' simple bedroom upon the top floor there was a sound-proof telephone-booth, and in Colonel Timmins' head there was a list of private telephone numbers. These numbers put Colonel Timmins into communication with persons whom he never identified more closely than to say that they were "friends of mine that I know down-town." Whoever they were, their friendship was worth having, inasmuch as to no magic except theirs could be attributed the fact that, within a few minutes after Colonel Timmins left the telephone-booth, the police always gathered up the official crowbars, acetylene torches and hydraulic rams and left Colonel Timmins' front yard.

The colonel himself left it once every year and went south to San Clementine, where in a white-stucco cottage that had a real front yard, to say nothing of a back yard and two side yards, he operated the Manhattan Club. In the cottage there were no ice-box doors, no steel screens, no rope ladders, and although there was a telephone, there was no sound-proof booth. Yet, under the red-tiled roof, over which roses climbed, the cards flowed from the faro-box, the dice skipped upon the green cloth and the little ivory ball clicked round the roulette wheel, and had so flowed, skipped and clicked during every evening in the week, except Sunday, for several years.

Police headquarters was on the other side of the narrow street, but so far as interference with the pleasures of the tourists or the profits of Colonel Timmins was concerned, it might as well have been on the other side of the wide world. No constabulary foot ever stepped upon the colonel's roof; no constabulary ax ever sank into the colonel's door.

Through that door, which was innocent of bolts, chains or peep-holes, Colonel Timmins, who was a mild-mannered, friendly little man whose sixty years had whitened his hair without having dulled his blue and

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humorous eyes, sometimes came in the cool of the evening to take a long walk with the best friend he had in San Clementine.

The name of this friend was T. T. Burroughs; his station in life was that of chief of police.

Among other things that Colonel Timmins and Chief Burroughs shared in common was a liking for a certain secluded bit of oyster-shell road which, companioned on one side by the Atlantic Ocean and on the other by a row of tall and ancient trees from which depended streamers of Spanish moss, led from a part of the town where the buildings were few to a part of the countryside where there were no buildings at all.

Had anybody questioned Chief Burroughs as to what passed between him and Colonel Timmins during their strolls in this lovely but lonely neighborhood of the ocean and the trees, it is likely that he would have replied that the matter was "strictly private, personal and confidential," the chief being what he was—one of those resounding persons who carry their own echoes. Had anybody questioned Colonel Timmins, the chances are that the colonel, who would no more think of using two words when one would do than he would think of playing two cards at one time, would have replied, with an engaging smile that would have removed any suspicion of abruptness, "It's a graveyard."

Strictly private, personal, confidential graveyard it remained, and as neither Colonel Timmins nor Chief Burroughs ever showed any inclination to change what the chief called the "statutes quo," there seemed to be slight probability that anybody would ever be able to prove that a connection existed between the moonlight strolls and the fact that, until Joe Smiley, the confidence man, appeared in San Clementine, Chief Burroughs never had entered his friend's gambling-house and Colonel Timmins never had entered his friend's jail.

Nor had not Joe Smiley taken it into his bullet-head to come to San Clementine would there have happened in San Clementine that which could not have happened in New York.

HIS arrival was as unwelcome as it was unexpected.

"'Big Joe' got in from New York this afternoon, and he's over at the Cortez Hotel," said Clem Allan, the faro-dealer, coming into the card-room in the Manhattan Club a few minutes before the dinner-hour one warm and fragrant evening in spring.

"Any more bad news?" asked Colonel Timmins, without looking up from his game of Canfield.

When he was alone, as he had been until Clem Allan's white-clad figure appeared in the doorway, it was Colonel Timmins' custom to entertain himself with games in which he was his own opponent. These were the only occasions upon which Colonel Timmins ever cheated. As, at the moment that the faro-dealer appeared, his employer had been taking an unwarranted liberty with his king pile, it is possible that the vexation in the colonel's voice was caused not so much by what Clem Allan had said as by what Clem Allan had seen.

"He's registered as 'Joel Slocum, of Hastings-on-the-Hudson,'" answered the faro-dealer, withdrawing his pained eyes from his employer's cards. "He's camping in one of those twenty-dollar-a-day suites, and I think some of his mob is with him. That Hastings-on-the-Hudson thing is funny. It ought to be Sing Sing on the Hudson."

Colonel Timmins sighed, stretched and stood up.

"That was quite a heavy vote you got the last time you ran for judge," he observed loftily.

"There you go!" protested his favorite subordinate. "You're always going to the front for some no-good guy that's in jail or that's just coming out of jail or that's just going into jail. And what gratitude do you get? Go on and tell me what gratitude you get!"

"Joe Smiley hasn't been in jail, at least for a long time," replied Colonel Timmins defensively. "He's probably just going along as usual, doing the best he can. I'm not exactly what you'd call crazy about him, but just because his ways and my ways are different isn't much of a reason for knocking him."

"He'd knock you quick enough if it would get him anything," warned the faro-dealer. "He's a wrong guy, and he'll never be anything else. He's worse than any of those guns and ex-cons that are always twoing you. He's——"

"Never mind what he is, Clem," the

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colonel interrupted mildly. "He doesn't worry about us. Why should we worry about him? And another thing: If I were you, I wouldn't put in any overtime worrying about the few dollars I slip now and then to the poor boys that need them. It's no disgrace to be broke. You're not broke. You've got something to be thankful for."

"There's one thing I'm thankful for," said the faro-dealer, as he helped the colonel collect his cards: "I don't see so many of your crook pensioners hanging round us down here in the winter as I see hanging round us in New York."

"You don't see any down here," Colonel Timmins reminded him. "It's too far for the boys to walk."

The faro-dealer grinned.

"That's one reason they don't come," said he; "but I wouldn't be surprised if there were others. What's this the motto of our little Chamber of Commerce is—'Help Clean San Clementine'?"

"No, it isn't, and you know it isn't," answered the colonel, with dignity. "Our motto is: 'Help Keep San Clementine Clean.'"

"Joe Smiley's come to the right town," declared the faro-dealer. "Joe is a first-class, two-handed cleaner."

"He won't try anything here," said Colonel Timmins confidently. "He must know that there hasn't been a job pulled in San Clementine since——"

He broke off suddenly.

The faro-dealer completed his sentence for him.

"Since you've been running the Manhattan Club."

"For a long time," qualified Colonel Timmins.

"Thanks to you and Chief Burroughs," smiled the other, a knowing look in his eye.

"Thanks to Chief Burroughs," said Colonel Timmins sternly. "And I'd like to know what you're grinning at."

"If you'll take a slant out of that window behind you, you'll see," affirmed the faro-dealer, undismayed by his superior's frown.

The frown deepened as the colonel's puzzled gaze traveled to a bullet-headed man in white flannels, who, with his Panama hat in one hand and a walking-stick in the other, was swinging jauntily toward the front door of the Manhattan Club.

"Why, it's Big Joe Smiley!" exclaimed Colonel Timmins, forcing his features into an unconvincing smile. "He's probably come down here for his health."

"You're probably going cuckoo," groaned the faro-dealer. "Big Joe never goes anywhere for his health——."

"It's all he'll get here," declared Colonel Timmins firmly, as he squared his shoulders and advanced to meet his unwelcome guest.

THE faro-dealer was right. Big Joe had not come South for his health.

"I have come South," he stated, cocking a cynical eye at Colonel Timmins, who sat across the table from him in the colonel's private dining-room on the second floor of the Manhattan Club; "I have come South to push a lot of suckers away from their coin."

There was in the colonel's mind no doubt of the truth of this statement. Mr. Smiley had made it at least half a dozen times during the two hours that the two had been sitting in the private diding-room, nor had Colonel Timmins been able to persuade him to reconsider his decision. He made one last effort.

"Joe," he said earnestly, "I've put up every argument I could think of. You've laughed at all of them. What I'm going to say to you now is no argument. It sounds too silly to be an argument; but, just the same, I'd advise you to pay a lot of attention to it. Now, listen; down here I'm regarded as a citizen. In a way——"

"'In a way' is right" muttered the confidence man scornfully. "You're on the make, just like I am. Our rackets are different; that's all. What does it get me—this your being a citizen?"

"I stand pretty well in the community," went on Colonel Timmins, ignoring the interruption. "I own a little property here; I'm figuring on getting some more. I've been thinking of turning the New York house over to Clem. He likes excitement; but I'm not as young as I used to be, and I don't seem to be able to enjoy anything lately except peace and quiet. As I say, I stand pretty well with the people down here, and——"

"You certainly got no kick on the way

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you stand with John Law," broke in the impatient confidence man. "If this was New York, the cops would have knocked you over long ago."

"In New York the cops have tried once or twice," said Colonel Timmins mildly; "but the cops down here are more civilized. They stay on their own side of the street and they let me stay on mine. You see, I don't allow anybody that lives in San Clementine to play in my house, and I'm very strict about minors and drunks and folks that can't afford to lose. I expect to spend most of my life here; so, naturally, I'm trying to be as much on the level as I can. You can see for yourself that my neighbors don't exactly hate me."

"I can see that you don't exactly hate yourself," remarked Big Joe Smiley, reaching for another of the colonel's long, thin cigars. "But there's no telling when you'll have to change your mind."

Colonel Timmins looked up at Big Joe sharply.

"Meaning just what?" he inquired.

"Gambling is gambling," said the confidence man, wagging a virtuous head. "I never saw any town where a gambler couldn't be made mighty unpopular."

"Lead your ace," advised the colonel.

Big Joe Smiley leaned across the table.

"You've brought it on yourself," he said disagreeably. "I didn't come all the way from New York to listen to a sermon from a gambler. I came down here to——"

"Push a lot of suckers away from their coin," finished the colonel, with a shrug of distaste. "I've heard that isn't done down here."

"It's never too late to begin," declared Mr. Smiley. "Now, I want you to listen carefully to what I'm going to say—I mean every word of it. You make up your mind to help me in my business or you won't do much more business yourself."

"You'll close me?" gasped the incredulous colonel.

"I'll close you," said Mr. Smiley grimly. "I'll hate to do it, but I'll do it."

"But I don't want to be closed," objected Colonel Timmins.

"And I don't want to go back to New York empty-handed," rejoined the confidence man. "I know that, if you'll help me, I can make a fine clean-up in San Clementine. You just pass the word to your friend, the chief of police, to let me alone, and I'll give you ten per cent. of all I——"

"Steal?" asked Colonel Timmins bluntly.

"Steal," repeated Mr. Smiley, unabashed. "What do you say?"

Colonel Timmins did not say anything, but he looked as though he might be about to cry.

"Well?" asked his impatient guest.

"Well," parried the colonel, "to begin with, I don't know a single thing about the confidence business. I don't see how I could——"

"You'll see before I get through," predicted Mr. Smiley. "Now I'll tell you about the confidence business——"

BEFORE the week was over Colonel Timmins knew a great deal about the confidence business. He knew so much that he felt qualified to give his teacher some advice.

If it had not been for this advice, Mr. Smiley would have sent to New York for charts and telegraph instruments and would have added a portable pool-room to the number of San Clementine's industries.

At first, such had been Mr. Smiley's intention, for although he was familiar with the money-machine, the Spanish prisoner, the dying prospector and other standard subjects, it was of the pay-off, with its ramification of fake brokerage offices and fake pool-rooms, with which he was best acquainted.

He had specialized in the pay-off, and it was the pay-off in one form or another which he insisted upon introducing to San Clementine.

He was inclined to favor the establishment of a pool-room in which the suckers, who, as he sternly observed, would not be suckers if they did not have larceny in their hearts, could lose their money upon horse-races that they imagined had been fixed in their favor.

But Colonel Timmins, who, although he had conquered his repugnance to Mr. Smiley and Mr. Smiley's nefarious pursuits, still retained in some measure his lifelong habit of independent thought, remonstrated against the unnecessary expense which he said would be entailed by the preliminary of the pay-off which is called "handing the sucker the convincer."

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One afternoon, while driving through the country in the closed car that Mr. Smiley had rented by the month, Colonel Timmins made his protest and gave his advice.

"I can't see why we should add to the overhead by letting the sucker win anything," said he. "I should think that a man who is as resourceful as you are would have no trouble in fixing up something that wouldn't cost so much."

THIS double-barreled appeal to Big Joe's cupidity and his vanity could have but one result.

"The wire is out," he announced. "With my ideas and your protection we don't need it. I'll rig something cheap and simple."

"You ought to know how," said the colonel blandly.

"I do know how," affirmed his preceptor, "and, what's more, I've got my eye on the sucker."

"You're looking at me," the colonel reminded him.

"I'm not thinking about you," said Big Joe; "I'm thinking about that small-town sport that's been pestering me for a week to give him tips on the stock-market. I've told you about him—the one that's got the brother that's a cripple."

"I don't remember," confessed the colonel, with no show of interest.

"Of course you remember," said Mr. Smiley. "I told you what a nuisance he's getting to be. He's sure I'm a big Wall Street man, and he can't ask me enough questions."

"Oh, yes," admitted the colonel; "I remember now. He's the pest that's always wheeling his crippled brother round in an invalid-chair."

"He ain't always doing that," grumbled Smiley. "He spends a lot of his time on the hotel porch telling me how smart we are."

"You and me?" asked the colonel hopefully.

"No; not you and me," answered Smiley in disgust. "Him and me. He don't know you're on earth. I'm the one that he thinks is so smart. You ought to hear him tell me how smart he thinks I really am. 'Mr. Slocum,' he says, 'I certainly wish you'd tell me how I can make some money in Wall Street. I got a little idle money that might just as well be working, and I feel like taking a flier.' You ought to hear him."

"I'm afraid I'd laugh," said the colonel. "I'd probably remember, just at the wrong time, that you'd be a better expert on Wall Street if the cops would only let you get past Fulton Street oftener."

"He never even heard of the dead-line." Smiley, alias Slocum, chuckled. "But he's certainly pretty sure that him and me are a pair of wise birds."

"He may be half right, at that," mused the colonel, who was looking out of the window on his side of the car. "I wonder if he plays cards."

"Keep on wondering," advised the confidence man.

"You needn't be so huffy," declared the proprietor of the Manhattan Club. "I was only thinking that if you didn't want him, I might want him."

"You'd better not try to take him," countered Smiley. "I discovered him. He's mine. I wouldn't be surprised if he'd be the first sucker we'd send against the pay-off."

Colonel Timmins' face cleared.

"I hope you won't change your mind," he said earnestly. "If he's as green as you say he is, my ten-per-cent. equity in him ought to be worth something."

"It won't be if something doesn't happen pretty soon," Smiley told him. "I'm running up quite an expense-account that'll have to be paid back to me before there are any profits. I'm spending my own money at the hotel and for this car and for entertaining prospects, and all that overhead'll have to come back to me before there's any dividing to be done. I had twenty thousand dollars when I landed here two weeks ago, and a couple of thousand of it is gone already. If you could have learned the game quicker, we could have got action already; but you've been awful slow, and then, when I did get a sucker lined up, you wouldn't let me take him."

"He didn't have any money," said Colonel Timmins defensively. "There's no use of our wasting our time on dead ones."

"*Your* time?" sneered his disgruntled colleague. "I wish you'd tell me what your time is worth compared to my money. I don't see you wasting any of your time, anyway. Your gambling-joint is running same as usual. At least, that's what I hear."

Everybody's Magazine, June, 1921

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"Let's talk about something else," suggested Colonel Timmins hurriedly.

The conversation had drifted upon dangerous ground. Mr. Smiley kept it there.

"And you've got a lot of nerve," said he, "to tell me to stay away from your gambling-joint."

"You agreed with me that you ought not to hang round the club," Colonel Timmins reminded him. "You said that if I'd look after the protection you'd spend your time catching a sucker."

"Catching *suckers*," corrected Mr. Smiley. "There's going to be more than one. I expect to stay down and do business until May."

Colonel Timmins stifled a groan.

"We'll have to have one to start with," he observed in a very businesslike manner. "Why don't you do something with that fellow that has the crippled brother? Is he too smart?"

"Too smart for me?" cried Mr. Smiley, amazed. "They don't come too smart for me."

THE fellow with the crippled brother certainly showed that he was not too smart for Mr. Smiley, for he walked straight into the trap that Mr. Smiley had set for him.

True, the work of convincing him that to bet five thousand dollars on a foot-race was as sportsmanlike as to bet an equal amount upon a Wall Street tip was not as easy as Mr. Smiley had thought that it would be.

But after Mr. Smiley had proved to him that the market was in a most unsettled condition and that the foot-race provided an opportunity for quick action for his money, he yielded.

"You thought he was too smart for me, didn't you?" taunted Mr. Smiley, coming alone into Colonel Timmins' private dining-room late one night a week after he and the colonel had taken their ride through the country. "Well, here's how smart he is." Mr. Smiley placed upon the table five one-thousand-dollar bills.

Colonel Timmins, who, after his speculative exercises of the evening, was regaling himself with bread and milk, looked up in surprise.

"You don't mean to tell me that he has fallen for the oldest confidence game in the world?" he asked admiringly.

"You asked me to fix up something cheap and simple," replied the complacent Mr. Smiley. "I've done that very thing. And this is only the beginning. He'll lose the five thousand to-morrow, but I won't lose him. He'll still have as much confidence in me as he ever had, and when the dust dies down on this one, I'll take him with another. The true test of a real operator is that he can keep the sucker's confidence no matter what happens. I always keep it. That's why I'm a good operator."

"But where do I come in?" asked Colonel Timmins a bit resentfully. "Don't you need me any more?"

"I don't really need you," said Mr. Smiley, with more than a trace of condescension in his tone; "but I might as well use you. I'll let you hold the stakes."

"But how do you know the sucker will let me hold them?" asked the colonel doubtfully.

"He's told me so," was Mr. Smiley's reply. "He'll do anything I tell him to do. When I suggested your name, he said he was satisfied. It seems that he's heard that you're on the square."

The colonel's eyes were upon the bread that he was breaking into his milk. He did not raise them.

"When does the thing come off?" he asked uneasily.

"To-morrow morning," said the proud Smiley. "It's the prettiest set-up you ever saw. It's pretty, and it's cheap. I've got this rube believing that the people we're betting against have put ten thousand dollars in your hands already. He's putting up five, and I'm putting up five against it."

"Where's your five?" saked Colonel Timmins innocently.

"I expected some fat-head question like that," said Mr. Smiley contemptuously. "I'm ready for it."

He reached into an inner pocket and brought out a wallet from which he counted fifteen thousand dollars in five-hundred- and one-thousand-dollar bills.

"You don't give me credit for knowing my own business," he complained. "I don't have to be told that the sucker may get nervous and insist on seeing that his money ain't the only money that's been

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put up. Now, if he wants to see the twenty thousand, you've got it to show him. But I don't think there's one chance in a million that he'll get suspicious. That crippled brother of his is awful strong for me. Even if the sucker tried to weaken, the cripple would make him stick."

"I've never seen that cripple that you're always doing so much talking about," said Colonel Timmins. "Where does he keep himself?"

"His brother never takes him away from the hotel," Mr. Smiley explained. "He's on the porch part of the time and in his room part of the time. I'll introduce you to him to-morrow."

"I'd rather not meet him," said Colonel Timmins candidly. "I don't think it's good luck to meet a cripple and then go out and trim his brother."

"You gamblers are a superstitious bunch," sneered Mr. Smiley, dipping into the colonel's humidor preparatory to leaving for the night. "I hope you won't think it's bad luck to get up to-morrow morning and go out and do some of the trimming."

"No," answered Colonel Timmins, shepherding him to the stairs; "I'll be out there and do my part of the trimming."

MR. SMILEY called for him the next morning, and the two drove to the Hotel San Clementine, where they found their victim waiting for them. He was beginning to weaken.

"I've been thinking very seriously of changing my mind," he told Big Joe and Colonel Timmins, as the three stood in the sunshine in front of the Hotel San Clementine. "Five thousand dollars is five thousand dollars, and if I don't bet it I won't lose it."

"And if you don't bet it you won't win another five thousand." Big Joe laughed, clapping him upon the back with reassuring geniality. "Remember that you're not the only man that's betting five thousand. My money is up, too."

"Yes; and so is the ten thousand the other side is betting against you gentlemen," spoke up Colonel Timmins. "I really don't see how any of you can back out."

"And I don't see what difference it makes to you whether I back out or not," argued the reluctant bettor. "You haven't any interest in this race, have you?"

"None in the world," declared Colonel Timmins, righteously indignant. "But I never heard of a real sport drawing down a bet."

"I haven't said I was going to draw it down. I only said I was thinking about it," said the other uncomfortably.

"We're wasting time," pointed out Mr. Smiley. "Let's go in and put it up to your brother."

"He's pretty weak this morning," demurred the wavering man.

"Come on!" ordered Mr. Smiley, and led the way into the room on the first floor where the cripple was in bed.

Colonel Timmins found himself shaking hands with a square-jawed young man whose facial resemblance to the troubled bettor who introduced him as his brother was slight.

The colonel made no comment upon this fact, but Mr. Smiley, in an effort to make everybody feel at ease, spoke of it.

"We're only half-brothers," said the cripple in a small, far-away voice. "But a real brother couldn't be better to me than Elmer is. Every day when I feel well enough to get up he wheels me round the porch in that invalid-chair over there in the corner. There's only one trouble with Elmer. He's so conservative. I'm different. I believe in taking chances. Of course I can't take very many, being crippled up in the legs like I am, but if I was well I'd be out taking chances all the time. Yes; I certainly like to take chances."

Mr. Smiley's eye brightened.

"You and I ought to be able to convince your brother that he's got a good bet," said he.

"Let's try," answered the cripple in that small, far-away voice which had brought a look of compassion to the grave countenance of Colonel Timmins. "He'll listen to me. Some of the money he's betting is mine."

"I think I'd better wait outside," suggested the colonel delicately, and, as nobody sought to detain him, he went out and closed the door softly behind him.

It was about an hour later that Colonel Timmins, Big Joe Smiley and the cripple's brother got out of Mr. Smiley's sedan at a lonely spot on the oyster-shell road.

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"We'd have been here sooner if Timmins hadn't wasted so much time gadding around town after we left the hotel," complained Mr. Smiley.

The colonel, who seemed to have been cheered, rather than depressed, by his visit to the cripple, came promptly to his own defense.

"I had to go back to the club—didn't I?—and get the twenty thousand, and I had to go to the store and buy this satchel to carry it in, and it wasn't my fault—was it?—that I met a couple of friends that insisted on stopping to talk to me," he said.

BIG JOE was too cross to answer. He crossed the road to a touring car which stood, half hidden by Spanish moss and a bed of giant ferns, under an old tree. On the front seat of the car sat a red-faced man who was rolling a cigarette, while on the seat behind him sat a thin youth who was smoking one. They were the only strangers in sight.

"Where is the rest of your crowd?" demanded Mr. Smiley.

"They decided that they wouldn't come out," replied the red-faced man, paying more attention to his cigarette than to his impatient questioner. "They said I should represent them. This is our runner." With his half-finished cigarette he indicated the thin youth.

"Here's our's," said Mr. Smiley, and whistled to his chauffeur.

That young man stood up, wriggled out of his livery and revealed himself in a gymnasium-shirt and running-trunks. He scowled at the thin youth.

The thin youth, getting swiftly out of his sweater and trousers, disclosed a gymnasium-shirt and running-trunks that might have come from the same store as those of the chauffeur.

"Any danger from the police?" asked Big Joe in a thrilling whisper that reached the ears of all those present.

"I'm not afraid of the police," boasted the chauffeur.

"The rest of us can't run as fast as you can," observed Colonel Timmins. "Speaking for myself, I'd like to say that if the police come after us for gambling on a professional foot-race, I won't be able to travel very fast carrying a satchel full of twenty thousand dollars——"

"Let's have the race now," broke in the cripple's brother eagerly.

"That's a good idea," said Big Joe. "The stakeholder, who is the only neutral here, will have to act as starter and judge."

"No, he won't," declared the neutral. "He can't. How can he be at both ends of this hundred-yard stretch at one time?"

This not unreasonable question led to a long argument, in the course of which everybody present, except the neutral, became more and more nervous.

"Colonel Timmins, you're simply wasting more time!" cried Big Joe. "You get over here when those boys are ready to start from up there, and when you're ready to have them start, you drop your handkerchief."

The boys, still scowling at each other, walked slowly to the other end of the course.

"Wouldn't it be more regular if I shot off a revolver?" inquired Colonel Timmins.

"We can't have any noise," warned Big Joe.

"Torment it!" exclaimed Colonel Timmins, in his agitation making use of the most formidable phrase in his vocabulary. "I didn't bring a handkerchief."

"Here's mine," said Big Joe, and Colonel Timmins' time-wasting tactics were exhausted.

Looking up the oyster-shell road to where the runners stood poised one hundred yards distant, the colonel dropped the handkerchief and, simultaneously, yelled, "Go!" in a voice of thunder that filled the countryside.

"Come on, Eddie!" yelled the cripple's brother in a voice almost as loud.

Eddie came on, but the trouble was that the other runner, the one against whom the cripple's brother and Big Joe were betting, came right on with him. Off on a good start, they were neck and neck until the finish-line was only a few feet away.

Then Eddie collapsed. Blood gushed from his mouth; his legs crumpled under him; he staggered, swerved from the path and pitched headlong into a bank of ferns. Past him, his thin rival rushed to victory.

But nobody paid any attention to him. Everybody was staring, horror-stricken, at his fallen competitor. Nobody stared harder than did Big Joe and the cripple's

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brother, each of whom had most unexpectedly lost five thousand dollars.

They were so interested in the young man that lay, writhing and groaning, upon the ground that they did not see a middle-aged man who, with his derby hat on the back of his head and a metal badge upon his coat, emerged from the underbrush and pointed a revolver at Colonel Timmins.

"Hands up!" said the middle-aged man. "I'm the sheriff, and you're all under arrest!"

He spoke so loudly that they all heard him, and so forcefully that they all obeyed—that is, all except the disabled athlete and Colonel Timmins.

The young man who had lost the race was evidently in such pain that he could not put up his hands; the stakeholder was plainly in such fright that he would not. His arms encircled the black satchel in which was the twenty thousand dollars; his eyes rolled piteously; his voice shook as he stammered,

"I can't hold my hands up unless I drop the money."

"Give me the money!" commanded the newcomer.

"Don't you dare!" shouted the red-faced man whose boy had won the race. "That twenty thousand belongs to me."

He lowered his hands and reached for the satchel. The sheriff reached also, and the sheriff got it.

"Evidence," said the sheriff grimly. "Gambling is a felony, and from the looks of that young man on the ground, you all may have to stand trial for manslaughter to boot."

"Eddie looks as if he is dying!" cried Big Joe Smiley in alarm.

"He sounds as if he is dying," said Colonel Timmins gloomily. "I want to get away from here."

"So do I," announced the cripple's brother.

"You'll all stay where you are!" snapped the sheriff. "My deputies will be here any minute to take you to jail. I'll confiscate that sedan over there and drive into town for a doctor. I might as well take one of you with me. I'll take the stakeholder. He's my most important prisoner."

Colonel Timmins' woebegone face reflected no appreciation of this compliment, and no curiosity as to why the sheriff had changed his mind and decided not to leave him with the others. It reflected nothing except anguish of mind.

The sheriff again warned those that he was to leave behind that his deputies might appear at any moment, and from Big Joe Smiley's sedan, in which he and Colonel Timmins sat with the satchel which contained twenty thousand dollars, he repeated the warning, this time accompanying it with a flourish of his revolver.

NOT until the car was out of sight of Big Joe, the red-faced man, his runner, the disabled Eddie and the cripple's brother did the sheriff's face relax.

"You've got to hand it to Joe," he said pleasantly. "I've worked with a lot of gunmobs in my time, but Smiley has all of them licked. The best thing about his style is that he never loses the sucker's confidence. Now, take that guy that dropped the five thousand. He saw Eddie have a hemorrhage, and as long as he lives he'll believe that Eddie would have won if he hadn't had it. He'd probably drop dead if he knew that what he thinks is blood is the red juice that was in the little paper bag that Eddie bit into as he was coming down the stretch.

"A real sucker always comes back for more. Joe will take this guy again. See if he don't."

"Joe told me you'd carry an empty gun," said Colonel Timmins accusingly. "I see yours is loaded."

"You're wrong," the fake sheriff told him. "There isn't a cartridge in it. Hello! What's this?"

"It's a log in the road," was Colonel Timmins' truthful reply.

"Come on; we'll lift it out of the way," said that member of Big Joe's gang that had impersonated the sheriff.

He and Colonel Timmins stepped out of the sedan.

"Stick 'em up!" ordered a harsh voice behind him.

They turned quickly and came face to face with a masked man—a man whose black mask concealed the upper part of his face but left his square jaw uncovered. It was a jaw that Colonel Timmins had seen before.

"Gimme the dough!" commanded the voice, which was not at all like the small,

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far-away voice that Colonel Timmins had heard in the cripple's room at the hotel a few hours before.

"No!" cried Colonel Timmins valiantly.

But there was less valor in his companion.

"That guy's got a gun and I'll bet it's loaded," he said plaintively, and handed to the masked man the satchel that contained the twenty thousand dollars.

With the satchel looped over one arm, the bandit, still covering Colonel Timmins and the fake sheriff with a revolver, backed into the underbrush.

A moment later his victims heard the exhaust of a motor-cycle, but it was several minutes later before they succeeded in removing the log from the road. They could have done it more rapidly had not Colonel Timmins been so weak.

Late that night, as Colonel Timmins sat over his bread and milk in his private dining-room in the Manhattan Club, a swarthy, thick-set man in a blue uniform appeared in the doorway.

"I've got some good news, Bill," he said to Colonel Timmins. "Smiley and his grafters are on their way back to New York. If it hadn't been for you and your two crooks, the Smiley gang would have stayed here and disgraced San Clementine."

"We've kept San Clementine clean," said Colonel Timmins, pulling out a chair for his guest. "The two boys that helped us certainly earned their money. 'Red' says that playing he was a cripple was the hardest job he ever did in his life."

"Where is he now?" asked Chief Burroughs, as he seated himself and began to fill his pipe.

"Now?" asked the colonel, a subdued twinkle in his blue eyes. "You mean right this minute?"

Chief Burroughs nodded.

"Well," said Colonel Timmins, reaching for a piece of bread, "right this minute he and his brother are down-stairs playing roulette, but they won't be there long. They've lost eighteen thousand already."

In July Everybody's

Hugh Walpole will have a story of youth, "A Fine Day."

Carlysle Graham Raht will contribute a two-fisted tale of the Southwest, "The Diamond-back."

Barrett Willoughby will be represented by "Half White," which is something more than just a story.

E. R. Punshon will have "Dog Eat Dog," a short story with a long punch in it.

Douglas Newton will contribute a love-story with real charm—no; there's no serious problem—"Long Distance."

W. D. Hepenstall sends a bit of humor from Ireland, "El Tancredo of Ballycan."

Also there will be the concluding instalment of "The Lariat," by Honoré Willsie.

And another instalment of "The Bucoleon Treasure," by Arthur D. Howden Smith.

For other announcements—about a new serial and a complete novel—see pages 88 and 132.

July *EVERYBODY'S*—out June 15th

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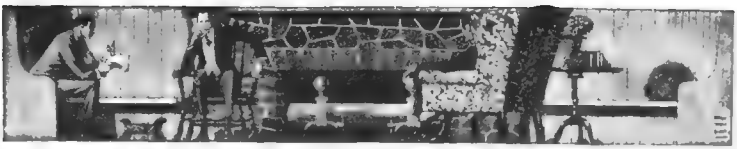

Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

INEZ HAYNES IRWIN ("The Lost Diana," page 36) decided, when she left Radcliffe College, that she would write plays.

I wrote four four-act plays and three one-act plays [she says] before I condescended so far as to consider writing a novel. And I wrote one twenty-thousand-word novel, one sixty-thousand-word novel, one one-hundred-thousand-word novel and one one-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-word novel before I condescended so far as to write a short story. Not a word of any of these productions was printed then. But my first short story was accepted, and thereafter I seemed to write both novels and short stories. Up to the war, my life seems to have been all work and study and reading and writing. Then I married Will Irwin, and thereafter it became all work and activity.

WE SUGGESTED to her that often an author has a career that is as good as a story. But she goes even beyond this belief.

I not only think that my own career is much more interesting than any story but that this is true of all, or of most all, lives. In fact, that every life is a book is one of my most tenderly cherished theories. For the last ten years I seem to be always on the verge of going somewhere else or coming back from somewhere else. I oscillate between San Francisco and New York, New York and Paris. I always cite as an example of this frenzied activity the month between January 22d and February 22d of 1916. In that month I was in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Washington, Bordeaux, Paris—and got married in the mean time. I spent two years in Europe during the war, before America came in, and the greater part of another year just after the armstice. I lived through four submarine-haunted voyages on the Atlantic, air-raids in Paris, Zeppelin raids in London. I went to the French front twice, the Italian front once. I was at Udine, the Italian headquarters town, when the Austrians broke through at Caparetto, and I came out with the first refugees.

MRS. IRWIN'S activity has been as strenuous mentally as it has physically, because, as she says, she has always possessed uncomfortable opinions which have succeeded in keeping her in hot water.

I inherited from my father, Gideon Haynes, who was the first real prison-reformer in this country, a strenuous belief in prison reform. I inherited from an aunt, Lorenza Haynes, who belonged to the first group—the Susan B. Anthony group—of suffragettes, a strenuous belief in equal suffrage. With Maud Wood Park, the present president of the National League of Woman Voters, I helped at Radcliffe College to form the first College Equal Suffrage League. Subsequently I joined the National Woman's Party. Once, in company with my friend, Maud Younger, I addressed ninety-one A. F. of L. unions in San Francisco—in behalf of two I. W. W. hop-pickers who had led a strike and were being held responsible for some violence that grew out of it. I also am much interested in the birth-control movement.

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT ("The Golden Bessie," page 2) seems to differ with Mrs. Irwin as to most people's career being as good as a story. He makes his own a case in point.

I wish I had had a career as good as a story, but—alas!—I haven't. I never murdered a baby or walked along the boulevards with a pet lobster or lived six months in the Sahara disguised as an Arab or any of these interesting things. I have lived in quite a few different parts of the United States, but always quite inconspicuously.

Probably one of the most exciting things that ever happened to me was the San Francisco earthquake, and even then we were living at Benecia Arsenal, thirty miles out of the city. Still, even there we got a good deal of the shock.

I have had my pocket picked in New York and Paris, and once I was chased a little way by a mob or part of one, in the forgotten New Haven riot—of 1920, was it? But that's about all.

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Edward Bellamy Partridge, author of "Life."
See page 82.

THE author of "Life" (page 82 of this issue) is Edward Bellamy Partridge, and he says that the story was based on an actual jail-delivery in San Francisco. But he hastens to assure us that the delivery was not his own. In fact, he has never broken out of any jail, although he may have been responsible for thrusting others into one. For up to 1912 he was a lawyer in a small town in western New York. Law was the family heritage.

But in the summer of that year I folded up the toga of the Law, packed it under the seat of the family automobile, cranked up, got in and started in a westerly direction. Did not stop until I had reached the sun-kissed hills of southern California. In this land I roped and hog-tied my first typewriter, and gradually became a word-wrangler of no mean local reputation. Then stories began to appear sporadically in the Eastern magazines. There was a book that looked promising until the war stepped on it. And after a little I went to France as correspondent to see what it was all about. Stayed to cover the Peace Conference.

When all was over he returned to San Francisco and to journalistic work, but "at last came down to earth and went on with short stories."

LOUIS WEADOCK ("Saving San Clementine," page 159) is another who broke the chains of the family profession—again the law. He says:

When I was graduated from the law school at Notre Dame University I had no more idea that I ever would write fiction than I now have that I ever shall practise law. My father is a lawyer. Six of my brothers are lawyers; four of my uncles are lawyers; four of my cousins are lawyers, and two of my brothers and two of my cousins are now studying law.

Liking travel as much as I did and knowing that I had no right to expect that I could get enough changes of venue to keep me provided with fresh fields and pastures new, I went, upon coming out of college, into the newspaper business, which, to my mind, is the most fascinating business of which I know anything.

For three years I've lived in Hollywood, where I've worked with Douglas Fairbanks and Thomas H. Ince, and where, between pictures, I write stories and, between stories, I write pictures.

My father, who is the best lawyer I know, is still convinced that I should have been a lawyer. Every time one of my stories is published he becomes more set in his views. He's right about everything else, and sometimes I think it's barely possible that he's right about this.

T. L. SAPPINGTON ("Spring Tonic," page 89) admires above all things the perseverance of the ant. No matter how blocked and frustrated, "it never loses its temper or gets in the least downhearted." "Would," he exclaims, "that I had more of the ant in me!" But we think, after all, that he must possess some of the ant's best qualities, for he writes thus about himself:

About three years ago I began to bombard the fiction magazines, but blew nothing open until I tried humor. Then I sold about eighty per cent. Before that I had only tried my hand at nonsense-yarns for children, like Frank Baum's and E. Nesbit's. I have written and sold about sixty short yarns and three serials.

T. L. Sappington, who wrote "Spring Tonic."
See page 89.

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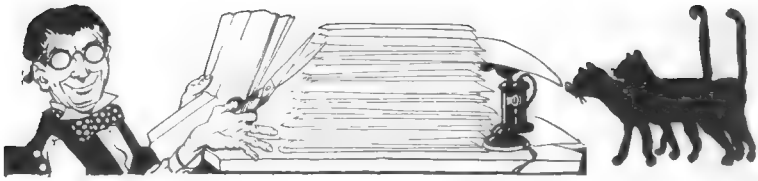

Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

On Clark St., Chicago: "*Any Hat in This Window Five Dollars. More Inside.*"
In Nashville: "*Boad and Largin.*"
In Meridian, Miss.: "*Cheatham & Lide, Lawyers.*"
In Chicago: "*Pie à la mode, with ice-cream.*"
On State Street, Chicago: "*For Rent. Inquire inside of cashier.*"
On Lake Street, Chicago: "*Bacchus—Buffet.*"
In Hartford, Conn.: "*Pale & Rich.*"
In Elkhard Lake, Wis.: "*Golldammer, General Store.*"
In Wetmore, Kan.: "*R. E. River.*"
In list of Auto Licenses in Ill.: "248414 *Honk, Chas., Oakland, (Ill.) Ford.*"
In New Carlisle, Pa.: "*Hug, The Barber.*"
Slogan of Garrettsville Laundry: "*Put Your Duds in Our Suds.*"
In New Vendome Hotel, Evansville, Ind.: "*Only gentlemen wearing bells are permitted to remove their coats.*"
In Milwaukee Telephone Directory: "*Cat Hospital. Night calls.*"
Secretary of Des Moines Accident Insurance Company: "*Mr. Bonebrake.*"
Barber in shop at Carbondale, Pa.: "*Mr. Razor.*"

(*Tucson, Ariz., Citizen*)

Among other numbers to follow will be the area, "Musetta's Waltz," by Mrs. Ernest Upshaw; the area, "Martha, Martha," by J. Reisner, and the famous sextet from "Lucia di Lammermoor," which will be sung by Mrs. R. A. Bushman.

Well, that's five less, thank goodness!

(*Utica, N. Y. Press*)

WELL-KNOWN RESIDENT OF LYONS FALLS IS DEAD

Lyons Falls people were greatly surprised Tuesday night to hear of the marriage of Miss Lillian Weir to Homer J. Markham, at Forest Church manse by Rev. William T. Eaton. (DR. E. G. R.)

Well, he's as good as dead, anyway.

(*Adv. in Hartford Times*)

FOR SALE—Piece of statuary Hiawatha, A 1 condition. 'Phone 4-3106.

Yes; but *which* piece?

(*In window of New York Dept. Store*)

Come in and inspect our underwear. (A. S.)

Just my luck to have weak eyes.

(*Burlington, N. J., Enterprise*)

The Catholic Choral Society is composed of young men and young women of both sexes.
(MRS. R. W. C.)

Whew!

(*Adv. in Reno, Nev., Gazette*)

We deliver eggs if potatoes are ordered.
Twin City Poultry Farm. 02t2s.

And if I ordered— Aw, shucks!

(*Eastford News in Windham County, Conn., Observer*)

E. W. Lyon and wife at Crystal Lake have been avoiding the grip, also Mr. and Mrs. Eddy at same place.

Yes; I just got out of their way, too.

(*Adv. in Philadelphia Inquirer*)

BEAUTIFUL HOOKED RUGS

Made by our early New England people which have lately come into high favor. (P. J. O'B.)

What! Has Independence Hall just heard of Faneuil, or Plymouth Rock?

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(Hartford Courant)

One of the largest adall aglal wawtwe New York City is owned and managed by a woman. (L. R. S.)

Well, she's welcome to it.

(Adv. in New York Evening World)

WOMEN—Good talkers, for house-to-house canvassing. (D. F. M.)

W-a-i-t a m-i-n-u-t-e—please!

(Ponca City, Okla., News)

FOR SALE—Fine Jersey cow giving milk, furniture and chickens. 208 South Ash Street. 306-4 JT.

Society for Prev. Cruelty to Anim. oughta know about that.

(Want-ad in New York Times)

POSITION as housekeeper; lady of 22 years, with 2 children, age 6 and 3; have no objection to other children. A. R. 22. (V. R. S.)

Blessings on thee, little old "red schoolhouse!"

(Adv. in New Orleans Item)

$2.00 Large-Size Double Blankets—$1.00. Specially adapted for negligees and underwear; flesh; limit 2 pairs to customer. (MRS. L. M.)

Anybody can have *my* 2 pairs right now.

(Items in Los Angeles Southwest Messenger)

The Rev. John G. Thompson, who has been the pastor of the Rodgers Park Presbyterian Church seven years, is to leave on Oct. 1st. He will preach his funeral sermon on Sunday morning, Sept. 22.

Mrs. M. E. Eylward, District Representation Campaign Manager, and her corpse of able assistants— (MRS. H. C.)

All Calif. can't be as lively as Hollywood is painted.

(A few court cases)

Driver v. Ford (90 Ill. 595)
Yee Won v. White (256 U. S. 399)
United States v. 254 Bottles of Intoxicating Liquor (281 Fed. Reporter, 247)
Outlaw v. Outlaw (114 S. E. Reporter) (When thieves fall out, then lawyers get theirs.)
Suedmeyer v. Meyer (237 S. W. 882)
Ford v. Ford (Not a collision, but a divorce.)
Flower v. Flower (Divorce where one threw bricks at t'other.)
Sheets v. Model Laundry (4490, Texas)
Wolf v. Drake (Where Wolf claims to have been damaged by a Drake. Some gander!)

(Mobile, Ala., Presbyterian News)

Rev. W. A. Nisbet, D. D., has been quite a help in supplying vacant pulpits. (E. F. A.)

Not knocking the D. D.

(Kadoka School Chronicle)

If you are in trouble and want to get into more, call on M. K. EASTHOUSE, Lawyer.

Right-O!

(Head-line in New York Herald)

GIRL HEARS RADIO MUSIC UNDERGOING TWO OPERATIONS

Well, that ain't the half of it, dearie.

(Portland, Ore., Journal)

The bandit fired excitedly. One bullet probably would have struck Charles Ahles, counter-man, if it hadn't glanced off the crust of a pie on the counter and been deflected into the wall. (J. F. J.)

One of King Tut's tarts, probably.

(Chicago Tribune)

OMAHA, NEB., Dec. 29—The Union Pacific Railroad system is negotiating for the construction of eighteen observation-cars, each with equipment for baths, it was announced at the system's headquarters here to-day. (MISS M. S. C.)

Observers are requested not to sit on the edge of the tubs.

(Ramsey, N. J., Journal)

If the legislature finally passes and the governor approves a measure introduced in the Senate Monday night, pedestrians, like vehicles, will have to display tail or some other kind of a light in the interest of safety on the highways of New Jersey after sundown. (W. C. T.)

Sure! Not so generally "lit up" as formerly.

(Follett, Tex., Limelight)

Many young girls of to-day are conspicuous obstacles to matrimony—without knowing it. When a young man's thoughts turn toward marriage, they also include the providing of a home for his mate. If the young lady has extravagant tastes, and becomes a heavy ante-nuptial drain upon his purse, time slips by with the home increasingly far away. Job waited seven years for Rachel. But Job was a patient man, and time was not as valuable then as it is now. Besides, Job is mighty dead—and the mold has been broken. Even a blind girl ought to see some things. That's all—perhaps too much.

Waited seven years? He was dead before he started.

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Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

"THIS is indeed very sad, sir," said the physician. "I greatly regret to tell you that your wife's mind is completely gone—completely gone."

"I am not at all surprised, Doctor," returned the husband. "She's been giving me a piece of it every day for the last fifteen years."

A COUNTRYMAN with a local reputation as a vocalist attended a dinner and was asked to sing. Although he had no music with him and was as hoarse as a frog, he consented to try, but broke down.

"Never thee mind, lad," said an elderly guest, trying to cheer him up; "never mind the breakdown, for thee's done thy best. But the fellow as asked thee to sing ought to be shot."

A COWBOY, out of work because of the slump in cattle, decided to make an easy and permanent place for himself by joining the army. The medical examiner found him sound physically and asked him if he had ever been ill.

"Nope," came the emphatic answer.

"Ever have an accident?" next asked the examiner.

"Nope; no, sir-ree!" came even more emphatically.

"Well, what's that rag tied round your finger for?"

"Rattlesnake bit me."

"Don't you call that an accident?" asked the doctor.

"Nope; the durn son of a gun did it on purpose."

TWO little Irish boys met an Episcopalian clergyman on the street. Noticing the clerical collar, one boy doffed his cap and said,

"Good-morning, Father."

The other boy grasped his companion's shoulder.

"Whist! He's not a Father. He's married and has two children."

THE artist was proud of his latest canvas; it was a futuristic painting, supposed to represent a Dutch landscape. He made arrangements to exhibit it in the art museum, and beneath it hung a printed notice bearing the words: "Do not touch with cane or umbrella."

When he went back to secure the return of his painting, he found that an appreciative small boy had added to the sign the following postscript: "Take an ax."

THERE had been an unusually severe thunder-storm during the night, and old Mrs. Jarvie, for the first time in her life, slept through it. As a rule, she rose, lit her candle, dressed herself and sat in a chair on a rubber mat. Rather than being thankful that she was not aware of the storm, the old lady waxed warm with wrath the following morning when she heard of it.

"Mercy me! I should think I was in a boarding-house 'stead of living among my own folks in my own home. Wa'n't there one of my children or grandchildren that thought enough of me to wake me? I might have been struck by lightning in my sleep and never known what killed me."

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"MY DAUGHTER sprang from a line of peers," said a proud father.

"Well," said her suitor, "I once jumped off a dock myself."

"FRED didn't blow his brains out because you jilted him; he came and proposed to me."

"Did he? Then he must have got rid of them in some other way."

AN ARMY mule at one of the cantonments "went west." The private who had charge of the last rites had to fill out the regulation form, and came across the entry: "Disposition of Carcass." He filled out the blank line: "Mean and deceitful."

PROFESSOR (*explaining the results obtained from the inflection of the voice*): Did I ever tell you the story of the actor who could read a menu so as to make his audience weep?

STUDENT (*strangely moved*): He must have read the prices.

A NERVOUS old lady occupied a room in a boarding-house beneath that of a young man who always dropped his shoes on the floor when he was getting ready to retire. One day she asked him not to do this, and he agreed. That night, he forgot his promise and dropped one shoe. Then he remembered and laid the other shoe down softly. He had been in bed a little while when there was a knock on his door and a voice asked,

"When are you going to drop that other shoe?"

UP IN Oxford County, Maine, there is a big stock farm which takes in several smaller farms. On one of these there is a small private burying-ground which has only two graves.

The owner of the stock farm came up from Boston one summer, bringing with him a cook who had never been in that part of the country before. On her first afternoon off she went for a walk round the place, and on her return the manager asked,

"Well, Mary, how do you like it?"

"I don't know yet," said Mary. "But it seems to be a very healthy climate. I walked through your cemetery just now, and I see there have only two people died here in the last hundred years."

JUDGE: But, Mandy, I can't make your husband pay an income tax. He has no income.

MANDY: I thought maybe if you made him pay an income tax, Judge, he'd have to go to work to get an income to be taxed.

IN THAT time which is now sometimes referred to as "the good old days," Pat and Mike had been imbibing entirely too much. Father Reagan met them on the street and made them promise to go to his house the next day to take the pledge.

Early the next morning Pat met Mike; they linked arms and started for the priest's abode. Their way took them past a saloon.

"Hist, Mike!" says Pat. "What say we shtep in an' have just wan more before we sign the pledge?"

"Naw," replied Mike. "The Faythers might smell our breath. Wait till we're comin' back."

A COLORED man was driving along the road in a ramshackle buggy drawn by a bony, spavined old horse, when a strange man hailed him.

"Hello, Uncle! Can you get me to the station in time for the next train at three-twenty?"

"No, suh; I don' b'lieve I kin, suh. This is a broken-down ole cavalry-hawse. You cain't git him offen a walk nohow."

"Huh! You say he's an old cavalry-horse? Let me in and drive him."

The man clambered upon the seat of the buggy and took the reins.

"Make ready!" he called out sharply. "Charge!"

The old horse pricked up his ears and broke into a gallop. As they reached the station, the man shouted, in a commanding tone,

"Halt!" The horse obeyed. The man flipped old John a quarter.

The next day two young men stopped John and asked to be taken to the station.

"Suttinly, gen'men," said John. "Git right in." He gathered up the reins and shouted: "Make ready! Charge!" Obediently the horse broke into a gallop, and soon reached the station.

"Git ready to jump, gen'men," John advised, looking frightened. "I've done forgot de word what stops him."

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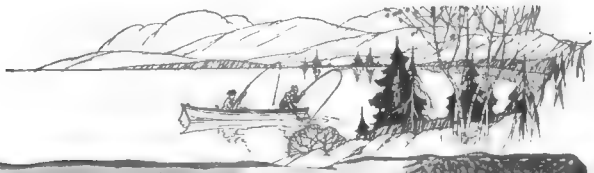
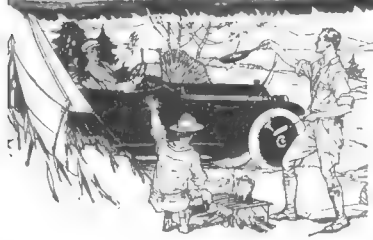


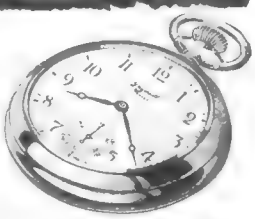
This is Ingersoll Time

For Outdoor Use Why Risk Your Expensive Watch?



The New YANKEE
$2.00

The new YANKEE with improvements and refinements that make it the finest YANKEE ever produced, and its partner, the new YANKEE RADIOLITE ($3), that tells time in the dark, are ideal watches for motorists, vacationists, sportsmen, etc. **Other Ingersolls up to $10.**



The New Yankee $2.00
Yankee Radiolite $3.00

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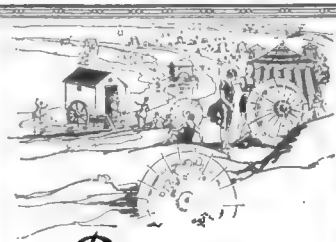

Plan your European Trip for Midsummer

IF you are going to Europe this year plan *now* to go in late July, in August or September. The season is beautiful; the tourist rush is over; prices are lower; the days at sea are clear and temperate.

Send the information blank below and let your Government help you with your plans. Learn about the swift, luxurious U. S. Government ships, operated by the United States Lines. They offer a passage for every purse; accommodations for every taste; and they are among the finest ships afloat.

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I Will Give You a Chance To Earn $200 a Week

RIGHT now, today, I offer you an opportunity to be your own boss—to work just as many hours a day as you please—to start when you want to and quit when you want to—and earn $200 a week.

These Are Facts

Does that sound too good to be true? If it does, then let me tell you what J. R. Head did in a small town in Kansas. Head lives in a town of 631 people. He was sick, broke, out of a job. He accepted my offer. I gave him the same chance I am now offering you. At this new work he has made as high as $69.50 for one day's work. You can do every bit as well as he did. If that isn't enough, then let me tell you about E. A. Sweet of Michigan. He was an electrical engineer and didn't know anything about selling. In his first month's spare time he earned $243. Inside of six months he was making between $600 and $1,200 a month.

W. J. McCrary is another man I want to tell you about. His regular job paid him $2 a day, but his wonderful new work has enabled him to make $9,000 a year. Yes, and right this very minute you are being offered the same proposition that has made these men so successful. Do you want it? Do you want to earn $40 a day?

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Have you ever heard of Comer All-Weather Coats? They are advertised in all the leading magazines. A good-looking, stylish coat that's good for summer or winter—that keeps out wind, rain or snow, a coat that everybody should have, made of fine materials for men, women and children, and sells for less than the price of an ordinary coat.

Now, Comer Coats are not sold in stores. All our orders come

J. R. HEAD

through our own representatives. Within the next few months we will pay representatives more than three hundred thousand dollars for sending us orders.

And now I'm offering you the chance to become our representative in your territory and get **your** share of that three hundred thousand dollars. All you do is to take orders. We do the rest. We deliver. We collect and you get your money the same day you take the order.

You can see how simple it is. We furnish you with a complete outfit and tell you how to get the business in your territory. We help you to get started. If you only send us six average orders a day, which you can easily get, you will make $100 a week.

Maybe You Are Worth $1,000 a Month

Well, here is your chance to find out, for this is the same proposition that enabled George Garon to make a clear profit of $40 in his first day's work—the same proposition that gave R. W. Krieger $20 net profit in a half hour. It is the same opportunity that gave A. B. Spencer $625 cash for one month's spare time.

If you mail the coupon at the bottom of this ad I will show you the easiest, quickest, simplest plan for making money that you ever heard of. If you are interested in a chance to earn $200 a week and can devote all your time or only an hour or so a day to my proposition, write your name down below, cut out the coupon and mail it to me at once. You take no risk, and this may be the one outstanding opportunity of your life to earn more money than you ever thought possible.

Find Out Now!

Remember, it doesn't cost you a penny. You don't agree to anything and you will have a chance to go right out and make big money. Do it. Don't wait. Get full details. Mail the coupon now.

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Please tell me how I can make $200 a week as your representative. Send me complete details of your offer without any obligation to me whatsoever.

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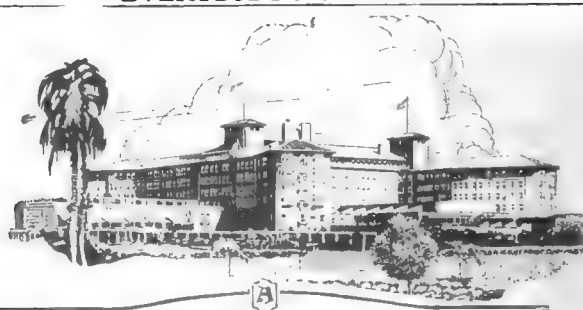

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Statement of the ownership, management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1923. State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared JAMES P. BIRMINGHAM, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Editor, None. Managing Editor, None. Business Manager, JAMES P. BIRMINGHAM, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. 2. That the owners are: *Owners:* THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. *Stockholders:* FREDERICK PUBLISHING COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City; FREDERICK PUBLISHING COMPANY, THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, a corporation, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities are: Holders of Butterick Co.: GEORGE B. BLACK, 813 Lincoln Avenue, Mendota, Ill.; C. D. BOSWORTH, 31 West 15th Street, New York City; JOHN M. DONINGTON, 37 Wall Street, New York City; CHARLES A. EDWARDS, 11 Wall Street, New York City; W. H. GILLESPIE, 100 William Street, New York City; S. R. LATSHAW, Butterick Building, New York City; LAURA J. O'LOUGHLIN, 514 West 114th Street, New York City; LAURA J. O'LOUGHLIN, 514 West 114th Street, New York City; ARMY L. WILDER, 43 5th Avenue, New York City; G. W. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City; C. D. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City; G. W. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. JAMES P. BIRMINGHAM, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 31st day of March, 1923. (Seal) DONALD FRANKLIN, Notary Public, New York County. (*My commission expires March 30, 1924.*)

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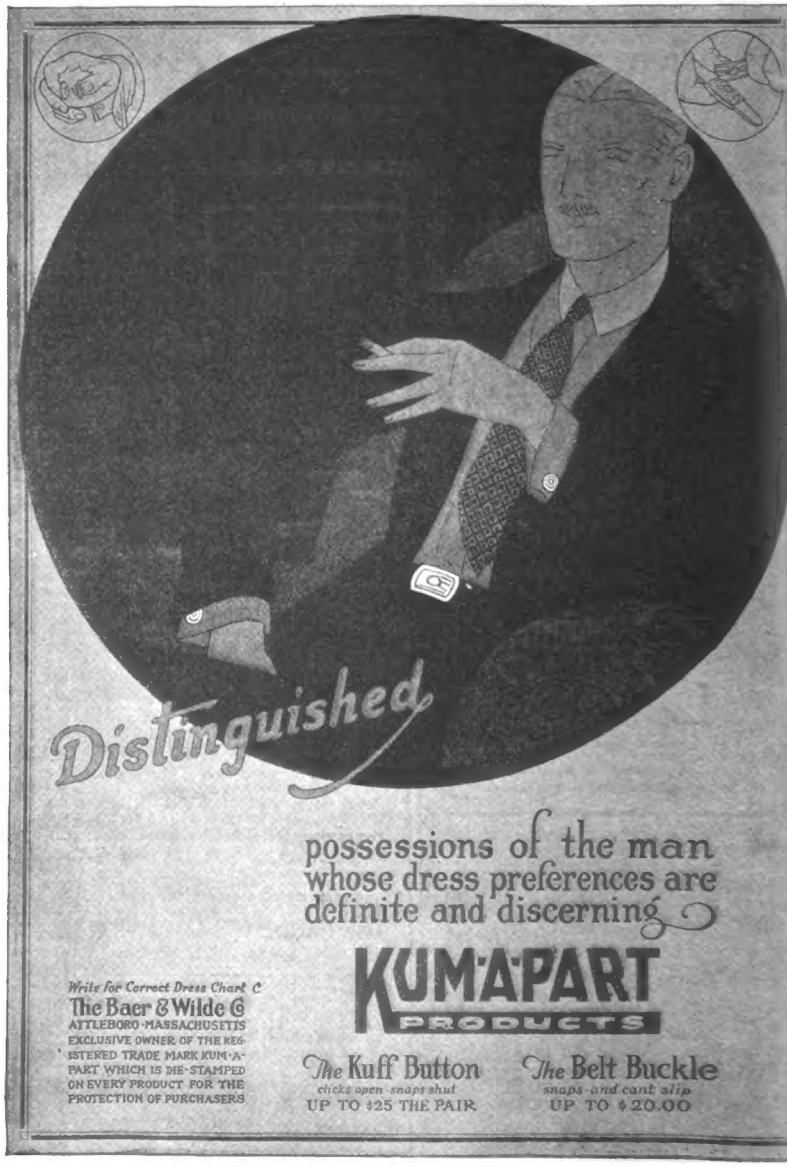
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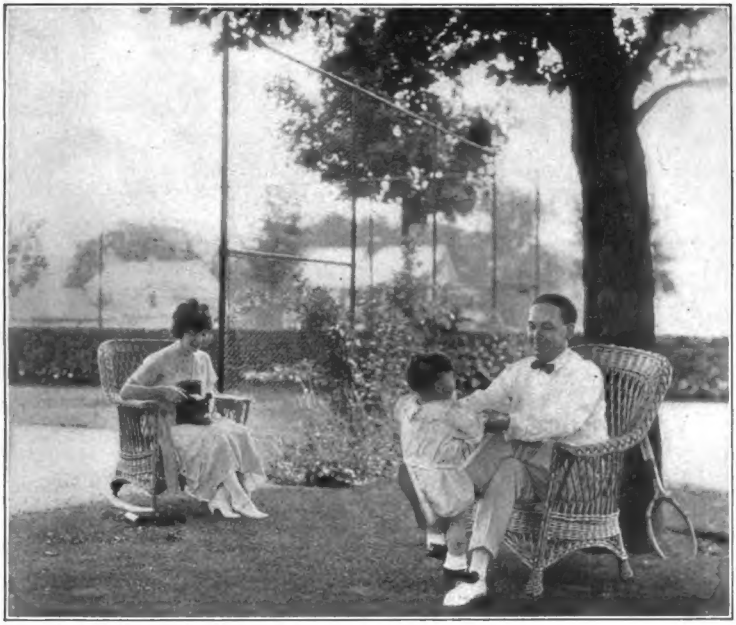

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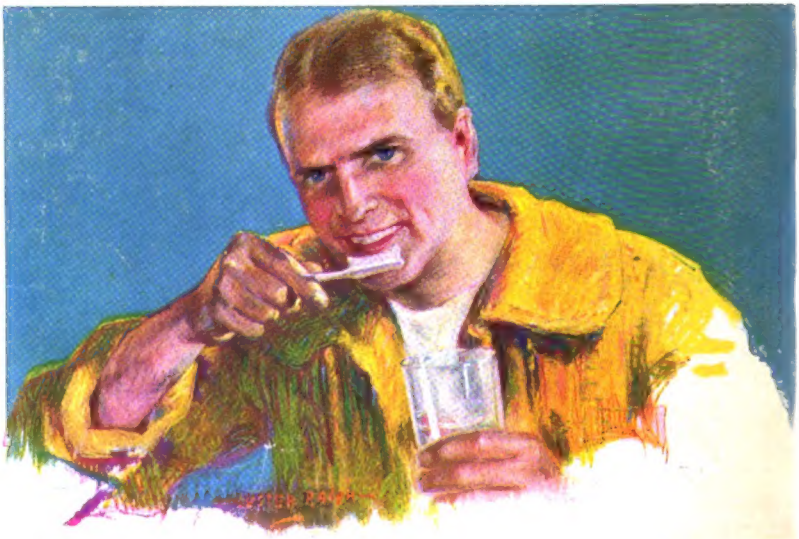

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